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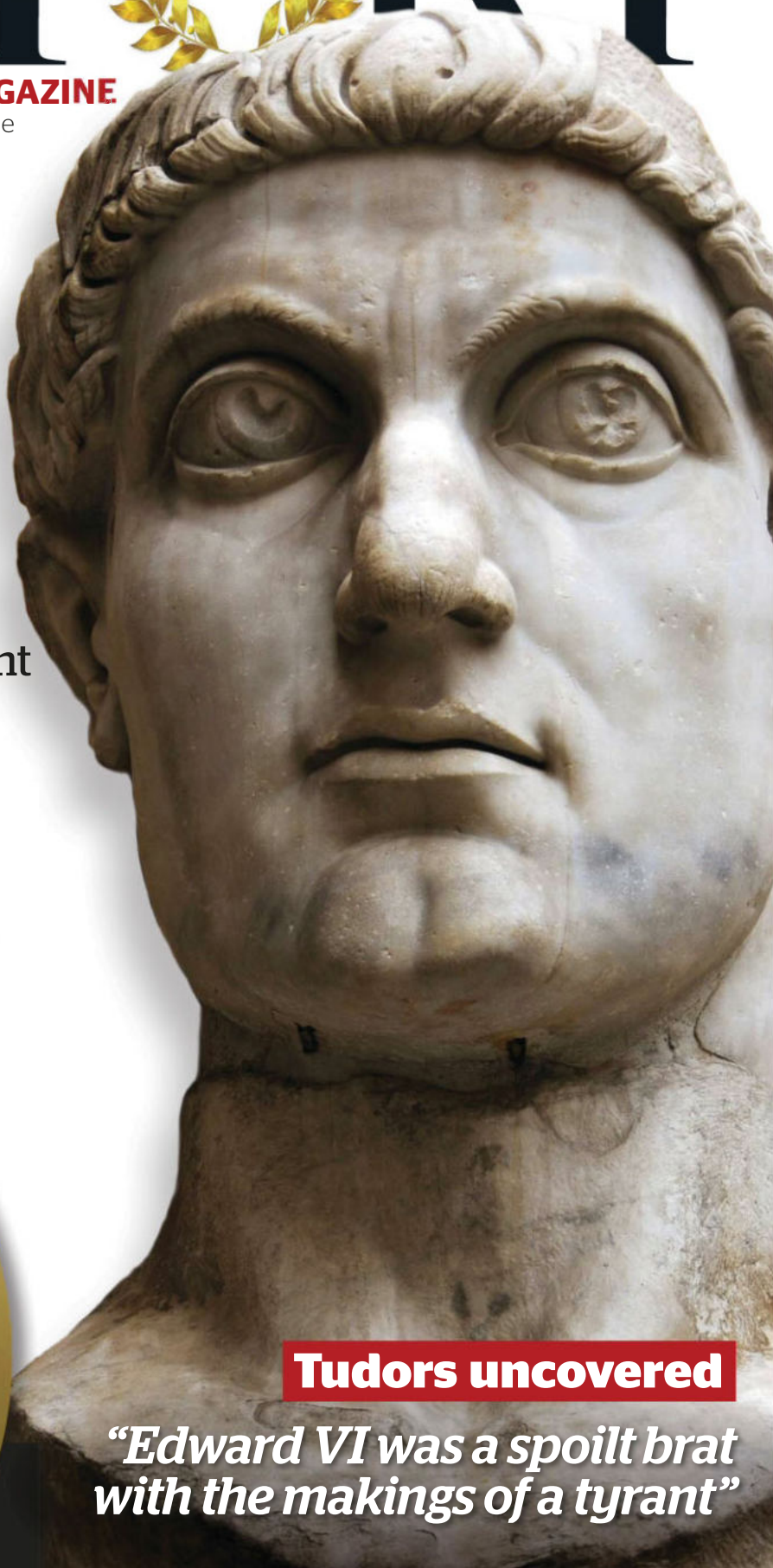
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JUNE 2016

WELCOME

BBC **HiSTORY**
MAGAZINE

“Welcome to the 200th edition of *BBC History Magazine*. Ever since our first issue in May 2000, we have brought you the best in popular history writing, presenting the latest thinking in an accessible format. That tradition continues this month where you can read Antony Beevor on **Operation Barbarossa** (page 20), Tracy Borman on the private lives of **Tudor monarchs** (page 62), and Dominic Sandbrook's alternative **history of the 1980s** (page 35). Plus, for our cover feature, on page 26, Kevin Butcher explains how **Roman Britain's rulers** took on the might of Rome and forged the first ever British empire.

We've also commissioned some special content to mark our 200th edition. On page 47 we've asked some of **Britain's leading historians** to tackle a number of thorny questions in 200 words each. Meanwhile, on page 73 our reviews editor Matt Elton has brought together four successful history writers to share their thoughts on the changing world of publishing. Meanwhile, on page 54, **Michael Wood** reflects on the most important historical events in this magazine's lifetime.

If you're not already a subscriber to the magazine, then you may well be interested in our **special 200th issue offer** where you can get your first eight issues for just £20. You'll find that on page 60. As a subscriber you'll get reduced ticket prices for events, including our **History Weekends** which are returning this autumn in Winchester and York. The full line-up is revealed on page 67. We hope to see many of you there.

Rob Attar

Editor

BSME Editor of the Year 2015, Special Interest Brand



THIS ISSUE'S CONTRIBUTORS



Kevin Butcher

Coins are one of the key historical sources for the Roman empire in the tumultuous third century AD, and I've always been fascinated by the light they shed on these dark times.

● *Kevin tells the story of Britain's rebel emperors on page 26*



Tracy Borman

Researching the lives that the Tudor monarchs lived behind closed doors has been utterly fascinating. The eyewitness accounts of their most intimate body servants cast these iconic kings and queens in a very different (and not always flattering) light.

● *Tracy investigates the Tudor monarchs' private lives on page 62*



Antony Beevor

You can argue that the origins of the Cold War lay in 1941 and Stalin's trauma about being caught out in the way that he was with Operation Barbarossa. That was why he was obsessed about occupying central Europe, to prevent any surprise attack in future.

● *Antony Beevor talks to us about Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union on page 20*

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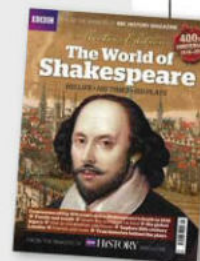
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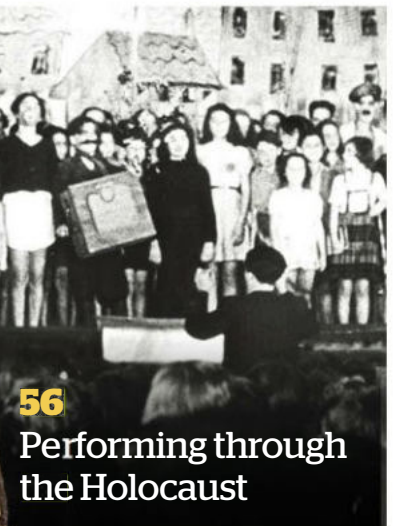
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ANNIVERSARIES

20 June 1837

Victoria becomes queen

The young princess awakes to the news that she has inherited the throne from her uncle

The first weeks of June 1837 found the 18-year-old Princess Victoria waiting patiently for her uncle to die. King William IV was aged 71 and was in poor health; shaken by the death of his daughter Sophia, he had sunk into a terminal decline.

On the 19th, the young Princess Victoria dashed off a letter to another uncle, the Belgian king Leopold. "I look forward to the event which it seems is likely to occur soon with calmness and quietness," she wrote. "I am not alarmed at it and yet I do not suppose myself quite equal to all; I trust however that with good will, honesty and courage, I shall not, at all events, fail."

Even so, when Victoria retired to bed in Kensington Palace, she could hardly have known how swiftly the climax would come.

At six the following morning, she was woken by her German-born mother, who brought the

news that, as Victoria recorded in her diary: "The archbishop of Canterbury and Lord Conyngham were here and wished to see me. I got out of bed and went into my sitting-room (only in my dressing gown) and alone, and saw them. Lord Conyngham then acquainted me that my poor uncle, the king, was no more, and had expired at 12 minutes past two this morning, and consequently that I am queen."

In 1837, Britain was not used to having such a youthful monarch – let alone a woman. That morning, Victoria's governess was poised with smelling salts in case it all proved too much for the young queen. But throughout all her meetings with her ministers and the Privy Council, she remained utterly composed. "Since it has pleased Providence to place me in this station," she wrote in her diary,

"I shall do my utmost to fulfill my duty towards my country."

Victoria in her robes of state, shortly after becoming queen in 1837



17 June 1462

Vlad the Impaler massacres 15,000

The Wallachian leader slaughters an Ottoman army

In the first half of June 1462, the Ottoman army marched through Wallachia, in present day Romania. Infuriated by the defiance of the Wallachian leader, Prince Vlad, Sultan Mehmed II had decided to teach his northern neighbour a bloody lesson. Yet as the Ottomans advanced, they found the wells poisoned, the roads barbed with traps and the countryside teeming with sufferers from leprosy and plague, whom Vlad had sent south to infect the invaders.

Outside the Wallachian capital, Târgoviste, the Ottomans halted for the night. The atmosphere was heavy with tension. And then, in the early hours of 17 June, Vlad attacked, accompanied by several thousand of his best men. As one Wallachian veteran later recalled: "During the entire night he sped like lightning in every direction and caused great slaughter." The fighting went on till four in the morning, leaving the Ottoman army in utter consternation. And then, according to the Wallachian veteran, Vlad "returned to the same mountain from which he had come. No one dared pursue him, since he had caused such terror and turmoil".

In Romania, the Night Attack of Târgoviste is remembered as a national triumph. But it also cemented Vlad's reputation as one of the most fearsome warriors of the age. When the Ottomans marched into Târgoviste the following day, they found the main road lined with the rotting corpses of thousands of their comrades, including the renowned admiral Hamza Pasha. All had been impaled on stakes, a gesture which had become Vlad's gory trademark. Later he became known as Vlad the Impaler, his name a byword for savage cruelty. But he is best known today by his Romanian patronymic – Dracula.

MARY EVANS

Dominic Sandbrook is a historian and presenter. His new series about Britain in the 1980s is due to air this summer on BBC Two



Prince Vlad, dubbed Vlad the Impaler, enjoys lunch while victims from one of his attacks are impaled on wooden stakes, as depicted in a c16th-century woodcut



30 June 1859

In front of a vast crowd, the French acrobat **Charles Blondin** crosses the **Niagara Gorge**, between the United States and Canada, on a tightrope.

24 June AD 109

In Rome, the emperor Trajan inaugurates a **huge aqueduct**, Aqua Traiana, taking water from Lake Bracciano into the imperial capital.



3 June 1937

At a chateau south of Tours, France, the former Edward VIII, now **Duke of Windsor**, marries the **American socialite Wallis Simpson**.



ILLUSTRATION BY
LUKE WALLER

In 1631 a group of corsairs (pirates based in north Africa) attacked the Irish village of Baltimore, as our illustration shows

20 June 1631

Algerian pirates sack an Irish village

Corsairs attack Baltimore, on Ireland's south-west coast, and kidnap 100 people

The corsairs struck at two o'clock in the morning. Armed with muskets and iron bars, they descended on the Irish village of Baltimore like a ravaging horde, tearing through the houses in search of booty.

By the time the residents had realised what was happening, it was already too late. Even as one resident, William Harris, began firing a musket to warn his neighbours, the corsairs had

captured at least 100 people from the village. Most of them were English settlers who worked in the fishing industry. Some 20 of the captives were men; the rest were women and children, carried off into slavery.

The Sack of Baltimore, which took place in the early hours of 20 June 1631, has gone down in Irish folklore. For years afterwards, the village was virtually deserted, as residents fled

for fear that the corsairs would return.

Contrary to legend, though, many of the corsairs were not north African. Even their leader, the dreaded Murat Reis, who ruled his own tiny state in modern-day Morocco, was actually a Dutch privateer, Jan Janszoon van Haarlem, who had originally been taken to north Africa as a prisoner before becoming a corsair.

Few of Murat's prisoners ever saw Baltimore again. Most of the men were destined for lives as galley slaves, working at the oars of pirate ships and toiling miserably in horrendous conditions. The women and children were better treated, but only because they were headed for the slave markets of Algiers. Baltimore's women and girls were bound for the harem; the boys, however, were destined to become Ottoman slave soldiers.

GETTY

9 June 1983

Thatcher wins again

The prime minister is returned for a second term

Even before the polling stations closed at 10 o'clock on Thursday 9 June 1983, few people doubted what the outcome would be. For months, opinion polls had pointed to a landslide victory for Margaret Thatcher's governing Conservative party, and a devastating defeat for Michael Foot's Labour opposition. "The victory was certain," began the BBC's news the next day. "For Margaret Thatcher there had never been any doubt. The only question: just how large would it be?"

Halfway through her first term, with Britain in recession and unemployment above 3 million, Mrs Thatcher had been the most unpopular PM since polling began. But now, having led her party to 397 seats in the biggest victory since 1945, the victor of the Falklands War was mistress of all she surveyed.

That night, as she and her husband Denis waved to supporters outside Tory headquarters in London, the congratulations were pouring in. Ronald Reagan



Margaret Thatcher, with husband Denis (centre) and Cecil Parkinson, who worked on the election campaign, at Conservative HQ, following the 1983 general election

phoned twice from Washington, while Helmut Kohl sent a telegram from Bonn. "Have a nice day," read a card accompanying flowers from her advertising men, Maurice and Charles Saatchi, while the BBC radio presenter Jimmy Young sent "warmest congratulations on a superb victory". There was a gushing letter, too, from another BBC presenter. "We all thank God," wrote Jimmy Savile, "that we can rest peacefully in our beds for another five years."

But not everybody was quite so delighted. "I think the country has something terminally wrong with it, to vote for Thatcher a second time," wrote Julie Burchill in *The Guardian*.

And, in the *Morning Star*, the miners' leader Arthur Scargill warned that it was now time for the unions to fight back. "People will have to take direct action," he said. "That means we will have to consider very seriously taking political strike action." ■

COMMENT / Pat Thane

"The Labour vote was split, so the Conservatives won many marginal seats"

Victory in the 1983 election has been interpreted, including by Thatcher at the time, as signifying popular support for her and her policies, and, particularly, enthusiasm for her victory in the Falklands War. Inspection of election statistics raises doubts. The Conservative vote was lower than in 1979, at 13,012,315 compared with 13,697,690. Turnout was down from 76 per cent to 72.7 per cent – then the second lowest since 1945 – not suggesting exceptional enthusiasm for Thatcher or the Falklands. Yet she won far more seats, up from 339 to 397, and her

overall majority rose from 43 to 144.

Labour, led by left-winger Michael Foot, had supported the war and the Falklanders against invasion by a right-wing Argentinian dictatorship (that had a habit of dropping opponents out of aircraft into the ocean) but slumped from 11,532,148 to 8,456,934 votes and from 269 to 209 seats.

Back in 1981, Labour had split when the Social Democratic Party (SDP) broke away. They won 3,370,834 votes and 6 seats with 311 candidates. The Labour vote was split in 311 constituencies, enabling the Conservatives to win many marginal seats,

largely explaining their increased majority on fewer votes.



Pat Thane is research professor in contemporary history at King's College, London



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Bairns in butter

A 17th-century painting of a baby. In the 1600s, newborns were routinely given wine and rubbed in butter, new research suggests

Buttering your baby: 17th-century child-rearing tips revealed

A new study suggests that our ancestors' idea of what constituted good childcare was very different to ours today. By **Matt Elton**

If you were to ask a midwife for advice on the best way to care for a newborn baby, it would be troubling if their suggestions included “give it wine” and “rub it with butter”. Yet those were the tips given to parents in the 17th century, new research shows.

That's because it was widely believed that babies were physically distinct from adults, and that their bodies could still be moulded in the days after birth. Wine was thought to increase the body's heat, making it even more pliable. The 1656 *Complete Midwives Practice* also suggested it offered the bonus of “cutting the flegm which the child has in

its throat”. Rubbing butter on the skin was thought to act both as a substitute for exercise and a way of provoking excretion.

“Babies' bodies were thought to be like wax because they had been floating in the womb for nine months,” says Leah Astbury, the University of Cambridge researcher behind the new study. “As a result, medical writers focused on excretion as the key way of ensuring newborn health. To survive, infants had to shed the fluid left over from pregnancy by crying. Bathing and causing friction on the skin by rubbing it with butter assisted this process.”

Theories about what happened in the



Bringing up baby An infant depicted in a 17th-century illustration. Childcare techniques in the 1600s may appear bizarre to us today but, argues researcher Leah Astbury, families went to great lengths to care for mother and child

womb strongly informed what were regarded as the best ways of treating infants in the first days of their lives. “Medical writers believed that babies had been doing nothing but feeding in the womb for nine months, so recommended waiting up to a week after birth to breastfeed,” Astbury says. “Babies were also swaddled tightly in many layers of fabric from shortly after birth, sometimes until they were a year old. This was again linked to the idea of their flexible, wax-like bones: movement was thought to potentially cause serious issues, and swaddling meant that this dangerous flexibility could be waited out.”

Despite the swaddling, babies were changed regularly and their carers were encouraged to touch and play with them. Indeed, Astbury is eager to stress that, despite the apparent strangeness of such techniques to 21st-century sensibilities, families in the early modern period were very knowledgeable about the care they offered mothers and infants, and took it very seriously. This is reflected in the growing number of ‘child-bearing manuals’ that were aimed at lay people (these were among the sources that Astbury drew on in her research).

So why is investigation of this subject,

“Husbands, brothers, and fathers were central in shaping the experience of having babies”

in this period, so important? “Historians have been interested in rituals surrounding labour and birth for a long time, but infants have largely been excluded from our view of childbirth,” Astbury says. “This is because personal sources about caring for babies are hard to come by: there are few references to medical care in letters and diaries, because family members who may otherwise have been sent letters often travelled to be at the birth. This poses a problem to historians, but retrospective accounts do still exist.”

Examining the child-bearing manuals together with these personal documents suggests that men were far more involved in childcare than we might expect. “There is a prevailing idea that men have only recently been knowledgeable about, and interested in, childbirth,” Astbury says. “It’s true that men were rarely present in the birthing room in this period – unless a physician was called to assist if a mother’s life was in danger. But, for all that, male family members were an active presence in the lead-up to labour and after the birth, and my work shows that many discussed childbirth often and candidly.

“They might write to other male relatives about their wife’s cravings, the estimated delivery date and whether it would be a boy or a girl. They also bought clothes and food necessary for the birth. I’d argue that husbands, brothers, cousins and fathers were central in shaping the experience of having babies in early modern England.”

WHAT WE’VE LEARNED THIS MONTH...

A Roman villa has been unearthed in a garden

The remains of an elaborate Roman villa have been found by chance by a Wiltshire homeowner digging to lay cables in his garden. The house, built between AD 175 and 220, is one of the largest of its kind found in the UK and is thought to have remained undisturbed since its collapse 1,400 years ago. Other finds at the site near the village of Tisbury include pottery and hundreds of oysters, suggesting that the villa had wealthy owners.

Austrian officials plan to seize Hitler’s house

The house in which Nazi leader Adolf Hitler was born is to be claimed by the Austrian government in order to stop it becoming a site of interest to fascist sympathisers. The property, in the town of Braunau, fell empty following a dispute between the government and its then owner in 2011. Possible plans for its future use include as a museum or education centre – while some have suggested that it should be demolished entirely.

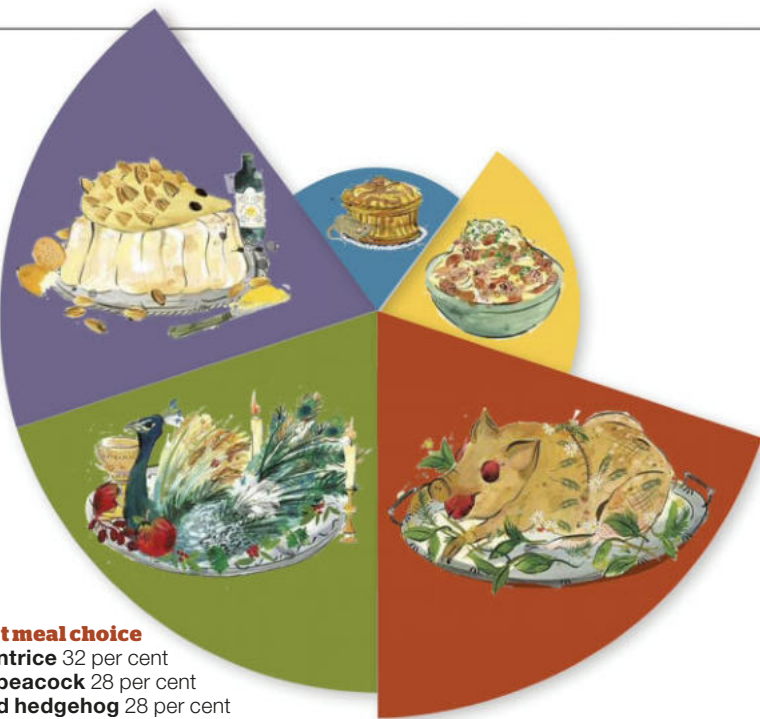
Turner will feature on updated UK banknote

The economist Adam Smith will be replaced on the UK’s £20 note by the artist JMW Turner when the new currency comes into circulation in 2020. Social reformer Elizabeth Fry, meanwhile, will lose her place on the £5 note in favour of ex-prime minister Winston Churchill. The changes mean that the majority of the historical figures featured on the notes will continue to be male, a situation that the Bank of England governor indicated needed “further progress”.



The image of Adam Smith is set to be removed from UK banknotes

BRIDGEMAN/LAMY



Your best meal choice

- **Cockentrice** 32 per cent
- **Roast peacock** 28 per cent
- **Almond hedgehog** 28 per cent
- **Calf's brain** 8 per cent
- **Rat pie** 4 per cent

SOCIAL HISTORY

You've chosen your favourite meal in history – and it's not fish and chips

If you could travel back in time and sample an unusual culinary dish from a specific era, what would you pick? That's the question that we put to five food historians in *BBC History Magazine* earlier this year – before giving you the chance to pick your favourite through a poll on our website.

The dishes varied in complexity, and not all were immediately appealing to modern tastes. Coming in last place, with 4 per cent of the popular vote, was boiled rat pie from the Victorian era. (Perhaps the prospect of “frying the rats in hot oil to remove the hair” proved unappealing). The dish from the Roman period, calf's brain with eggs and giblets, registered just 8 per cent of the vote – perhaps not surprising, given that even its expert nominee described it as “lingering long in my olfactory senses”.

Other dishes fared better. A Georgian dessert of flavoured almond paste

moulded into the somewhat unlikely semblance of a hedgehog (and which would have been presented on a lake of calves'-foot jelly) was the top choice for 28 per cent of respondents. The medieval delicacy of roast peacock was favoured by the same percentage.

Given the appetite for all things Tudor, it's perhaps fitting that the dish from that period emerged victorious. The cockentrice was half a boiled cockerel sewn to the opposite half of a young pig, described as a “royal meat” – and not entirely dissimilar to 21st-century ‘four-bird’ roasts.

But is it something that would go down well on today's tables? Barney Desmazery, food editor at large at *BBC History Magazine*'s sister publication *BBC Good Food*, isn't sure. “Modern dishes tend to be cleaner, and include only one type of protein,” he says. “This would be much more of a novelty, much as hog roasts tend to be.”

So does Desmazery fancy trying it? “I'd like to see it being made, but I'm not sure that I'd like to eat it!” he says. *ME*

For tips on how to prepare a three-bird roast, visit the *BBC Good Food Magazine* website at bbcgoodfood.com/howto/guide/how-prepare-three-bird-roast

OBITUARY

David Baldwin

David Baldwin, a historian who published widely on medieval history, has died at the age of 69.

Baldwin worked as a lecturer and tutor at the universities of Nottingham and Leicester, and wrote books on subjects as diverse as Henry VIII and Robin Hood. Yet it is for his work on Richard III that he may be most remembered – notably his 1986 prediction that the king's remains might be found on the former site of the church of the Grey Friars in Leicester. The claim was made almost three decades before the discovery of Richard's bones on that site in 2012.

Historian and author David Horspool said: “With his pioneering article, David Baldwin set the ball rolling for the most famous archaeological discovery in recent memory. He had a commendably level-headed attitude to Richard III's historical reputation, too, remarking that he was ‘a man of his time’.”

Chris Skidmore, whose new biography of Richard III will be published later this year, said: “I was struck by David's endless fascination for the historical truth and, above all, his lack of ego, even though his article ultimately paved the way for the king's discovery. His later work reached a popular audience through both his 2012 biography of Richard and *The Women of the Cousins' War*, which he co-authored in 2011 with Philippa Gregory and Michael Jones. I can't help feeling that he would have had plenty of other equally fascinating books in him.” *ME*



David Baldwin, who predicted the location of Richard III's grave

The historians' view...

Was life better for disabled people in the past?

The current discord around welfare changes for disabled people focuses on its cost, on levels of deservingness and accusations of malingering. Two historians offer their personal takes on disability in Britain's past and show that similar arguments have been with us for centuries

Interviews by **Chris Bowlby**, a BBC journalist specialising in history

“Accusations of people ‘faking it’ can be found in the medieval period and intensified in the late 16th and early 17th centuries

DAVID TURNER

Since the development of state welfare in Britain, people with impairments have been seen as the most deserving of assistance, but also potentially very costly to maintain. Both these factors have fed into a suspicion of ‘fraudulent’ persons faking impairments or sickness in order to claim assistance, either via the formal mechanism of poor relief or via charities or begging. Accusations of people ‘faking it’ can be found in the medieval period, but they intensified in the late 16th and early 17th centuries around the time of the Poor Laws.

The Elizabethan and Jacobean equivalent of modern ‘scroungers’ were known as ‘rufflers’, ‘palliards’ or ‘clapperdungeons’ – dangerous vagrants who allegedly covered their bodies with fake sores, bound up their legs to fake impairments, or used other

tricks to dupe the unwary. Largely the invention of sensationalist pamphleteers, these stereotypes gave fraudulent disability its own language and identity.

Stereotypical images of welfare cheats can be found at most points, but there are times when suspicion of the ‘disabled’ intensified in the context of wider concerns about the funding of welfare. For example, concerns about the spiralling cost of poor relief at the end of the Napoleonic Wars – exacerbated by returning military personnel – led to a parliamentary enquiry. It highlighted a variety of fraudulent practices among the begging poor, including pretending to be wounded soldiers or ‘hiring’ poor children to suggest they had dependants to feed. Other witnesses complained that they felt intimidated by beggars on the street.

Social, cultural, economic and political changes all impacted on experiences of disability. It is impossible to gauge the scale of disablement caused by industrial expansion during the 19th century, but many commentators believed that work in factories, on the railways or in coalmines produced high levels of sickness, injury and impairment. Mines inspector Herbert Mackworth estimated in 1855 that about twice as many were ‘disabled for life’ by mining accidents than were killed.

Those unable to return to work faced an uncertain future, but the era of industrialisation is also striking for its proliferation of



Protesters gather in London in 2014 to condemn the government cuts to disability benefits

initiatives to help disabled workers. We need to remember that ‘disability’ is a fluid state. Victorians distinguished between ‘total’ disability and lesser degrees of impairment that might permit some return to work. The Wellcome Trust-funded project ‘Disability and Industrial Society: A Comparative Cultural History of Britain’s Coalfields 1780–1948’ has shown that there was, for much of the 19th century, a strong paternalistic sense of obligation among colliery managers to provide alternative work for those left ‘disabled’ by underground work.

We shouldn’t romanticise the past, and there are plenty of horror stories in the archives of people with disabilities being neglected or abused. However, there is a good deal of evidence that the welfare of people with impairments was taken seriously by our ancestors.

The current welfare system established at the end of the Second World War is under strain, caused in part by an ageing society and the greater survival of people with disabilities compared to the past. We need a flexible approach that values the diversity of human experience. Understanding the richness of disability history is part of this process.



David Turner is a professor of history at the University of Swansea and an expert in the field of disability history



The battle of Waterloo. Disabled soldiers returning from the Napoleonic Wars added to worries about the cost of poor relief



South Wales, c1920: many maimed miners returned to work underground

“With no state system to support them, they became very vulnerable to the vagaries of individual supporters of charities

JULIE ANDERSON

definite hierarchy in disability; historically the blind were an object of pity, yet they were also seen as the most intelligent and worthy of support. Before the postwar welfare state, charity was the most common form of support for disabled people. Even after the war, charity was still very important, especially for those who did not receive their disabilities in war.

Politicians tend to support the most powerful, and disabled people do not have much power. Yet disabled people have at times organised themselves politically. For example, a group of blind men marched on London in 1920 to protest the poor wages paid to blind people. For even though disabled people have often worked, throughout history their work was frequently valued less than that of able-bodied people.

Work gives people independence, and disabled people are no different. The most successful integration for disabled people in the workforce was after the Second World War. Many had contributed to the war effort. Deaf people were employed in shell filling, as it was incredibly noisy. Other disabled people, such as RAF pilot ace Douglas Bader, demonstrated to the public that a double amputee could still contribute.

The Disabled Persons Employment Act of 1944 was a landmark that put forward the notion that disabled people could and would work. By 1950, more than 900,000 disabled people were registered under this legislation.

The 1995 Disability Discrimination Act was another milestone, providing disabled people with the means to work and to get assistance with staying in the workforce.

Transport has been another hugely important area. In the 1930s, disabled people in wheelchairs either paid for two seats on the train or had to sit in the baggage car. I relayed this story to a friend, who told me that in the 1970s he also had to sit in the train's baggage car in his wheelchair. Fortunately, we don't have baggage cars any more, so disabled people will not be forced to sit there. However, there are very few stations which are accessible and, until that changes, many disabled people will require their own transport in order to lead an independent life. **H**



Julie Anderson is a reader in history at the University of Kent, specialising in physical and sensory disabilities

DISCOVER MORE

BOOKS

- **Disability in Eighteenth-Century England** by David Turner (Routledge, 2012)
- **War, Disability and Rehabilitation in Britain** by Julie Anderson (MUP, 2011)

PAST NOTES

WRISTWATCHES

OLD NEWS

Man eats £1,000 in notes

Dundee Evening Telegraph
22 March 1932

In 1932, a tale of sorrow and stupidity was reported from France by the *Dundee Evening Telegraph*. In Lyons lived Jean Coiffer, who had kept a cafe in the city. Aged 42, Jean reportedly attempted to poison himself with a dose of Veronal, a barbiturate commonly used as a sleeping aid in the early half of the 20th century. When this proved to be unsuccessful in bringing about his end, he started to eat his personal store of bank notes.

However, having swallowed a sum of almost £1,000, he began to choke and natural instinct caused him to cry out. His cries attracted the attention of his neighbours, who immediately called the doctor. On his arrival, the doctors managed to remove some of the money from Jean's throat, although sadly not all, and the man passed away shortly after.

News story sourced from *britishnewspaper archive.co.uk* and rediscovered by

Fern Riddell. Fern regularly appears on BBC Radio 3's *Free Thinking*



ILLUSTRATION BY BEN JONES



A pair of giant watches in Frankfurt, 1953. The wristwatch was then 150 years old

As wearable technology grows in popularity, **Julian Humphrys** looks back in history to its earliest form - the wristwatch

Who made the first wristwatch?

The Guinness Book of Records gives this honour to Swiss watchmakers Patek Philippe and Co who made a watch in 1868 for a Countess Koscowicz of Hungary. However, the company itself makes no such claim, merely stating that it was the world's first Swiss wristwatch. It's been suggested that Queen Elizabeth I may have been given a wearable timepiece by her favourite, Robert Dudley, but the first purpose-made wristwatch we know about dates from the early 19th century. It was ordered in 1810 by Napoleon's sister, Caroline Murat, and manufactured by Abraham-Louis Breguet in his Paris workshop on the (appropriately named) Quai de l'Horloge.

Who first wore wristwatches?

Women. These early watches were primarily seen as pieces of feminine jewellery. A man wanting to know the time would reach for his pocket watch. This wasn't just a matter of fashion; the workings were extremely delicate and if you were going to take a watch with you on your daily business, you needed to protect it by carrying it safely in your pocket. Such watches originated in the 17th


century, although mechanical timepieces worn like pendants on chains date from the 1500s.

What led to their adoption by men?

War. As the 19th century drew to a close and military tactics became more sophisticated, there was an increased need for precise timing on the battlefield. But if you were carrying a revolver and a map, riding a horse or even flying a plane, it was impractical to go rummaging for your watch. The answer was to wear it on your wrist. In 1880 Kaiser Wilhelm I of Germany commissioned 2,000 wristwatches for the officers of his navy. Many soldiers initially improvised by buying leather straps with a cup to hold their pocket watches, but the First World War saw the widespread adoption of purpose-built wristwatches, with toughened glass and robust mechanisms.

How did they become fashionable among the general population?

The First World War shifted public perceptions. Men no longer regarded them as unmanly, impractical pieces of jewellery. They were now the mark of a man of action. By the outbreak of the Second World War, the pocket watch was all but obsolete. **H**

A photograph of a man and a woman in a library. The man, on the left, is bald with a short beard and is wearing a dark grey long-sleeved shirt. He is smiling and looking down at a large open book. The woman, on the right, has long, curly blonde hair and is wearing a light blue long-sleeved top. She is also smiling and pointing at a page in the book. They are standing in front of a white bookshelf filled with books. The book they are looking at is open to a page showing a historical map or illustration.

Dr Suzannah Lipscomb,
award-winning academic, broadcaster
and Head of History at NCH

'If historians neglect to educate the public, if they fail to interest it intelligently in the past, then all their historical learning is valueless except in so far as it educates themselves.' (G M Trevelyan)

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LETTERS

Dedicated follower

LETTER OF THE MONTH

As the proud owner of 199 issues of *BBC History Magazine* I look forward to hearing the 200th issue plopping onto my doormat as much as I did the first one in May 2000. I have been entertained, informed and (in some cases) infuriated by all that I have read within the pages.

My favourite issues include: *Revealed, the Secret of the Holy Grail* (February 2004), *The Face of the Fifties* (July, 2004) and *Happy Victorians?* (Christmas, 2015). But I could go on. There are just too many to list!

I congratulate all who have been in any way involved with the publication of this very successful magazine and here's to the next 200 issues!

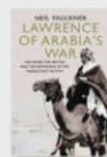
Eileen Davies, Lincolnshire

Editor replies: Thanks for your kind words Eileen, and for being such a loyal subscriber. We greatly appreciate our dedicated readers, who have been with us over many (and some, all) of our issues.



Do you have a favourite issue? Tell us which edition you most enjoyed

● We reward the letter of the month writer with our 'History Choice' book of the month. This issue it is *Lawrence of Arabia's War* by Neil Faulkner. Read the review on page 79



Talking More the sinner

I write in response to your article in the May edition – *Thomas More: Saint or Sinner?* In my view he was definitely the latter. He tortured my nine-times great-grandfather John Tewkesbury, who was racked in the Tower, tied and whipped to More's 'Joshua Tree' at Chelsea, and burned at the stake. There is a wood engraving depicting Tewkesbury carrying the faggots to the burning site. To me, Sir Thomas More was evil incarnate.

Terri Vandegrift, Hamilton, New Jersey

Saxons and Normans united

It is worth adding to the article on Edmund Ironside (*Ironside: Anglo-Saxon Warrior King*, April) that his great granddaughter, Edith/Matilda (c1080-1118), the daughter of St Margaret and Malcolm III Canmore, married Henry I of England, thus uniting the Saxon line of kings of the House of Wessex with the Norman line of kings.

Gordon Lyon, Edinburgh

Edward the bigamist?

I have read with interest Professor Pollard's overview of Edward IV (*Edward IV: Champion of the Wars of the Roses*, May) but was disappointed that having mentioned his womanising, he made no reference to Eleanor Talbot. Edward's relationship with her made his (initially secret) marriage to Elizabeth Woodville an act of bigamy, and ensuing children, illegitimate.

King Edward IV's early death must have seemed like a godsend to the acquisitive Woodville family, who would have seen to it that the teenage Edward V did as he was told.

Edward IV did not win the Wars of the Roses. The shameful end to that conflict was ensured by Margaret Beaufort, John Morton and the Stanleys.

George Cobby, Buckinghamshire

The Roman attraction

In Mary Beard's article on *Why Rome Ruled the World* (April), she examined Rome's policy of extending their citizenship to outsiders, suggested this

was the key cause of their success, and called it a "nation of asylum seekers". I wouldn't disagree, but why was Roman citizenship so attractive that individuals from Europe and Africa were prepared to blend their existing way of living with the Roman culture?

For the ambitious, Rome offered a Roman version of the American Dream – a meritocratic, mostly rule-bound path to wealth, power and peace, based on hard work or hard soldiering, rather than living under the local hidebound religion or corrupt minor king. I'd suggest this is the full reason for the Romans ruling the world: not just that they offered their citizenship, but that so many millions of people found that citizenship attractive. Over centuries, this meritocracy declined into corruption, arbitrary confiscations and rent-seeking, and so the culture became less attractive.

Philip Dunn, High Wycombe

To be, or not to be...

I was interested to read your article about Shakespeare in the April issue (*Shakespeare: The Historians' View*), particularly the all too brief section on the authorship debate.

As usual, academia dismisses the Shakespeare authorship debate as the province of conspiracy theorists, but there is a reasonable (though circumstantial) case for the belief that the name 'William Shakespeare' was actually a pseudonym for Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford.

The biography of William Shakespeare of Stratford gives no clue as to how he acquired the education and life experience necessary to write the works attributed to William Shakespeare. We can trace no apprenticeship in his writing career, no sponsorship of his education and no access to a library. He was a man of no recorded education, came from an illiterate

Mary Beard argued that Rome's citizenship policies ensured its success





A portrait of Edward de Vere. Reader Jim Kennedy believes he may have been the real author of the plays attributed to Shakespeare

family, married an illiterate woman and was the father of illiterate children.

Yet the true author had deep knowledge of law, history and classical literature and he seems to have travelled on the continent, at least in northern Italy where many of the plays are set.

Jim Kennedy, Co Kildare, Ireland

A Catholic calling?

I've often wondered about how much of Shakespeare's creative process was influenced by the events of his day and Jerry Brotton (*How Shakespeare Wrote History*, April) made some very interesting observations.

Anyone studying Shakespeare would be aware that he lived through some of the most turbulent social and religious changes that Britain has experienced and Michael Wood's research, some years ago, made a pretty convincing case for Shakespeare being, if not a practising Catholic, at least a Catholic sympathiser. With that in mind, perhaps another of his plays could be considered a veiled comment on the schism between Catholic and Protestant Christians.

The Chorus in *Romeo and Juliet* says: "Two households, both alike in dignity, In fair Verona, where we lay our scene, From ancient grudge break to new

mutiny, Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean. From forth the fatal loins of these two foes, A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life; Whose misadventured piteous overthrows do with their death bury their parents' strife."

Besides which, the lead character is very nearly called 'Rome'.

David Kirk, Nottinghamshire

Corrections

● In *Five Things To Do* in March's edition we wrote that the contribution of Girolamo to the Venetian Renaissance "cannot be underestimated". It should of course have been "overestimated". We meant no disrespect to the great Italian artist.

● Niall Boyce points out that in the review of *Homintern* in April's issue (*Books*), Friedrich Engels' 1869 letter was written to Karl Marx and not Sigmund Freud as we had stated.

WRITE TO US

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SOCIAL MEDIA

What you've been saying on Twitter and Facebook



@HistoryExtra: Who do you think was the best monarch in history and why?

Alexandra Fiada Alexander the Great by far! The only conqueror in history who was loved by his subjects - who genuinely mourned his death - and who disseminated culture and civilization instead of destroying them

Lisa Bolle Queen Victoria, who managed to keep Great Britain together during one of the biggest transformations in history, the industrial revolution

@natesaint Henry II, a king who was born a count but managed to secure the crown then turned a divided country into an empire

Joel Darlington Pharaoh Hatshepsut. She successfully negotiated a path from the royal nursery to the very pinnacle of authority and her reign saw one of ancient Egypt's most prolific building periods

@Smabs2 Elizabeth I for proving women can be great monarchs too, can inspire, win battles and promote religious tolerance

@anniegaph Augustus Caesar: infrastructure, military, tax, diplomacy, Roman expansion, a month named after him and he was declared a God

Necessittee Taylor Lyday Catherine the Great of Russia. She introduced sweeping reforms and also improved Russia's economy and public health, a big feat in her day

@danwiththeplan1 Edward III: he turned England from a marginalised small country into a superpower respected all over Europe

Karen Cossar Elizabeth I. She was a woman in a man's world and managed to keep the country peaceful in turbulent times

@HigherEdActuary Edward IV every time. Proper warrior king; avenged his dad; married in secret against his advisors' wishes

@LordHobbers Antoninus Pius: benevolent emperor, oversaw a peaceful era for the Roman people & appointed another great man as his successor

@nelldarby George IV, for at least having a personality!

Hitler's grea



test mistake

With the 75th anniversary of Operation Barbarossa approaching, Rob Attar asked **Antony Beevor** why the German invasion of the Soviet Union ended in chaos and bloody failure

Fire in the east
German troops in an anti-tank artillery unit on the eastern front, c1941. The invasion force that attacked the Soviet Union was the largest in history at that time

AKG-IMAGES

IN CONTEXT

Operation Barbarossa

Launched on 22 June 1941 and named after the 12th-century Holy Roman emperor Frederick Barbarossa, the German invasion of the Soviet Union represented a decisive breaking of the 1939 Nazi-Soviet pact. The Axis attacking forces of more than 3 million men split into three groups, aimed at Leningrad, Kiev and Moscow.

The Soviets were caught by surprise and suffered appallingly in the early exchanges, losing millions of men, as well as cities such as Kiev, Smolensk and Vyazma. However, the German losses were also high and, a combination of improving Soviet defences and the Russian winter halted the Weh-

rmacht outside the gates of Moscow in December. Meanwhile, Hitler had opted not to fight for Leningrad, instead subjecting the city to a lengthy siege.

Although the Soviet Union survived the initial onslaught, the German forces launched renewed attacks in 1942 that made further inroads into Soviet territory. It took the battle of Stalingrad of 1942–43 to decisively turn the tide and begin the long process of reversing German gains.

Operation Barbarossa was accompanied by large-scale abuses of Soviet civilians, including the Jewish population, of whom over 1 million were murdered as part of the Final Solution.



On the march German troops close to Smolensk in September 1941. The city was captured in a major victory for the Wehrmacht against the Soviet Union

Did Hitler have a long-term plan to invade the Soviet Union?

Hitler quite often fluctuated in his attitude towards great projects, but I think that his invasion of the Soviet Union was something that went all the way back to the end of the First World War. His detestation of Bolshevism was absolutely visceral, but the idea was also influenced by Germany's occupation of Ukraine in 1918 and the idea that it would become a breadbasket in the future. Securing this territory could prevent a repetition of the British blockade and resulting starvation of Germany that occurred in the First World War. So it was strategic as well as instinctive.

The real plan didn't come about in detail until December 1940, though. Interestingly, Hitler justified the invasion of the Soviet Union to his generals as being the only way

to knock Britain out of the war: ie if the Soviet Union was defeated then Britain would have to give up and surrender, which was a curious analysis of the situation.

Was, then, the Nazi-Soviet pact never intended to be anything other than a temporary expedient for Germany?

Exactly. It was quite deliberate. Hitler realised he needed to knock out the western allies first. And this showed a remarkable confidence, particularly when one thinks that the French army was said to be the most powerful in the world at that time. From Stalin's point of view, he was very much hoping that the 'capitalist' states and Nazi power would bleed each other dry. The Nazi-Soviet pact was essential for him too as he had just purged the Red Army and needed to postpone any fight with Germany.

One of the main criticisms of Operation Barbarossa is that the Germans left it too late to launch the invasion. Do you agree with this?

It is certainly true that Barbarossa *was* launched too late and there has been quite a lot of debate about this delay. One old theory is that it was the invasion of Greece [in April 1941] that delayed Barbarossa, but even at the time it was known that the real reason was the weather. The winter of 1940–41 had been very wet and this caused two problems. Firstly, the forward airfields of the Luftwaffe had been totally inundated and simply couldn't take the aircraft until they dried out. Secondly, it delayed the redistribution of motor transport to the eastern front.

As an interesting aside, nearly 80 per cent of some German divisions' motor transport actually came from the defeated French army. This is one of the reasons why Stalin loathed the French and argued at the 1943 Tehran conference that they should be treated as traitors and collaborators. The fact that the French hadn't destroyed their vehicles on surrender was to Stalin a really serious element against them.



The Nazi Hunger Plan envisaged the population of the major cities being starved to death. They reckoned on 35 million dying

Stalin is known as someone who was incredibly paranoid, so how did he miss so many warnings of a potential attack from such a predictable enemy?

This is one of the great paradoxes of history: that Stalin, one of the most suspicious of all people, was fooled by Hitler. It has led to a whole raft of different theories including one that Stalin was actually planning to invade Germany first. That theory, though, is a load of nonsense. It is based on a Soviet contingency planning document from 11 May 1941 where General Zhukov and others, who were well aware of the Nazis' invasion plans, were examining possible responses to this. One that they looked at was the idea of a pre-emptive strike. However the Red Army at the time was totally incapable of carrying out such an action. For one thing, the prime movers for their artillery were actually tractors, which were then being used for the harvest!

But it is interesting how Stalin rejected every single warning he got. Not just from the British but even from his own diplomats and spies. The answer may lie in the fact that, ever since the Spanish Civil War, he was con-

vinced that anyone living abroad had been corrupted and was somehow instinctively anti-Soviet. That's why he rejected warnings coming from Berlin, even when they managed to send back a miniature dictionary for German troops including terms like "take me to your collective farm". He was convinced it was all an English provocation to force a fight with Germany.

It is extraordinary though. Stalin even accepted Hitler's assurance that the reason why so many troops were being moved to the east was to get them out of the bombing range of the British. You would have thought he would have done a little bit of research on the range of British bombers, which at the time were so weak that they were incapable of making any serious dent into German forces.

What were Germany's goals with Operation Barbarossa? Did they intend to conquer all of the Soviet Union?

The plan was to advance to what was called the 'AA line', from Archangel to Astrakhan. This would have taken them past Moscow and more or less beyond the line of the Volga. This is why, when it came to the battle of

Stalingrad, many German troops felt that if they could only capture the city and get to the Volga they would have won the war.

The plan was that any Soviet troops who had survived after the great battles in the early part of Barbarossa would simply be a rump and could be kept under control by bombing. Meanwhile, the conquered areas of Russia and Ukraine would be opened up for German settlement and colonisation. According to the Nazi Hunger Plan, the population of the major cities would have been starved to death. They reckoned on 35 million being killed.

The whole project depended on a rapid advance to the 'AA line' and, above all, the destruction of the Red Army through vast battles of encirclement. Some battles of this kind did indeed take place. Kiev, for example, was one of the largest battles in world history in terms of the number of prisoners taken.

Did this German plan have any prospect of success?

In late October 1941, in a moment of panic, Stalin approached the Bulgarian ambassador Stamenov and told him that he thought Moscow was going to be captured and that everything would fall to pieces. But Stamenov responded: "You are crazy. Even if you withdraw to the Urals, you will win in the end." This to me illustrates a key reason why Operation Barbarossa was probably not going to work. The sheer size of the country meant that the Wehrmacht and their Romanian and Hungarian allies never had enough troops for the occupation and conquest of such a huge area.

Secondly, Hitler had failed to learn a lesson from the Japanese assault on China, where

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It was a very cold winter. The German machine guns were freezing solid and they would have to piss on them to warm them up

another highly mechanised and technically superior force attacked a country with a vast landmass. It showed that you can certainly win in the beginning but the shock and awe of cruelty, which Hitler also used against the Soviet Union, ends up provoking as much resistance as it does panic and chaos. Hitler never took this into account. “Kick in the door and the whole structure will come tumbling down,” was the phrase he kept using, but he completely underestimated the patriotism of most Soviet people, their feelings of outrage and determination to fight on.

Why had Germany not learned the lessons from Napoleon about the challenges in conquering Russia?

Hitler was actually very conscious of Napoleon. One of the reasons he insisted on attacking Leningrad was because he was reluctant to follow Napoleon's main route to Moscow. That helped account for the delay in reaching Moscow. Some have argued that if Hitler had ignored Leningrad he could have captured Moscow.

In the early months of Barbarossa is it fair to say that Stalin was an impediment to the Soviet defence?

His refusal to allow withdrawals, particularly from the Kiev encirclement, meant the loss of hundreds of thousands of men. It was a ‘stand or die’ order every time and there was very little flexibility. It was only really in the last stage of the retreat to Moscow that Stalin was allowing more flexibility, and it was a good thing that he did because it preserved enough troops to save the city.

Was there any danger that the Soviet regime might have collapsed or been overthrown in the early months of Barbarossa?

There was no chance of any overthrow by popular revolt or anything like that. In fact, there was very little criticism because nobody really knew what was happening and the anger of the people at that particular stage was entirely focused on the Germans and their treasonous breaking of the Nazi-Soviet pact. The main risk to Stalin was a palace coup and there was a famous moment where some of the leading Soviets went to the dacha in which Stalin had gone into a complete funk. He saw them arriving and thought they had come to arrest him, but he soon realised that they were scared too and they persuaded him that he had to carry on.

How important was the Russian winter in deciding the battle for Moscow?

There's no doubt that the scale and depth of that winter was important. It was a particu-

Caught cold

German troops in a blizzard on the eastern front, April 1942. “Temperatures sometimes went down to -40C and the Germans were simply not equipped for it in terms of clothing and weapons,” says Antony Beevor



Hitler's nemesis

A propaganda poster extolling Stalin's military capabilities. The Soviet leader's myopia cost his country hundreds of thousands of troops, but he later became an effective war leader

larly cold winter, with temperatures sometimes going down to -40°C and the trouble was that the Germans were simply not equipped for it in terms of clothing or weapons. The German machine guns, for example, were often freezing solid and they would have to piss on them to try to warm them up. The German panzers had very narrow tracks, which couldn't cope with the snow, while the Soviet T-34 tanks had much wider tracks.

Even before the winter, the Germans had already been slowed down by the autumn muds but the frost made things worse. They had to light fires under the engines of their aircraft at night purely to get their motors going in the morning.

Alongside the military invasion, the German forces inflicted horrendous abuses on civilians in the Soviet Union. Did this end up detracting from the German war effort?

It didn't really in 1941. The resources allocated to the Einsatzgruppen and Sonderkommandos and police battalions and so forth were not taking much away from the war effort at that point. You can make that



troops in France already. It would have been throwing away 100,000 men for no purpose whatsoever and Churchill was absolutely right to stop it.

On the Axis side, could Japan have done more to help Germany succeed with Operation Barbarossa?

There was a curious lack of co-ordination between the two countries. There were no joint staffs at all and hardly any military attaches from each country. The Japanese didn't even tell Hitler that they were going to launch the attack on Pearl Harbor, which in itself is quite astonishing.

What the Germans had hoped, of course, was that the Japanese would have attacked the Soviet Union in the far east in the autumn of 1941. The reason they didn't goes back to August 1939 and the battle of Khalkhin Gol [a border clash between the Soviet Union and Japan, which was decisively won by the Soviets]. Even though this was a relatively small battle, it was one of the most influential in the war because it persuaded the Japanese that it was not worth attacking the Soviet Union. They signed a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union and they stuck to it. Hitler really hoped that the Japanese would attack in the east and it would have had an effect because Stalin wouldn't have been able to transfer his Siberian divisions to the fight against Germany.

Was the invasion of the Soviet Union Hitler's biggest mistake?

It was. Had he maintained the new status quo after the defeat of France and steadily built up his armies using the resources of the countries he had already occupied, he would have been in a very strong position. Then, had Stalin tried to launch a pre-emptive strike himself in 1942 or 1943, it could have been disastrous for the Soviet Union.

There's no doubt that it was the decisive moment in the war. Some 80 per cent of the Wehrmacht's casualties occurred on the eastern front; it was Barbarossa that broke the back of the German army. **E**

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Antony Beevor is one of the world's bestselling military historians. His books include *Stalingrad* (1998), *D-Day: The Battle for Normandy* (2009) and, most recently, *Ardennes 1944: Hitler's Last Gamble* (Viking, 2015). He will be taking part in *BBC History Magazine's* History Weekends in Winchester this October see historyweekend.com

DISCOVER MORE

BOOK

► **The Second World War** by Antony Beevor (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2012)

argument much more by 1942 when you had the Final Solution and they were allocating vast quantities of the railway system to the transport of Jews, when it should have been used to support their armies.

One thing that might have given them a chance of winning in 1941 – and this was advocated by some officers – was to create a Ukrainian army, a million strong. This of course was absolute anathema to Hitler because he couldn't accept the idea of Slavs. But if they were going to have any chance of success, to make up for their lack of numbers in such a vast landmass, it had to come from turning it into a civil war. Yet there was no question of ever giving the Ukrainians self government or anything like that, and this was one reason why those Ukrainians who did side with the Germans to begin with soon realised they were being completely conned.

What do you make of the British reaction to Barbarossa? Could we have done more to help the Soviet Union?

The Soviets were pretty scornful about the sort of help we were sending but we couldn't do much to be perfectly honest. Let's remember, we are talking about the summer

of 1941 when we'd just lost a large number of vessels in the Mediterranean from the evacuation of Greece and Crete. Plus there was the growing threat in the far east. We simply didn't have the resources.

Churchill wanted to make every effort, or impression of effort, of helping, but the trouble was that the fighter aircraft we were sending over in the convoys were, on the whole, fairly obsolete Hurricanes in pretty bad nick. When the RAF was told to hand over aircraft to send to Russia they weren't going to give up their best aircraft. Similarly, we were sending them Matilda tanks which were also obsolete at that point; greatcoats which were useless in the Russian winter; and steel-shod ammunition boots which would actually accelerate frostbite! So, yes the Soviets were pretty angry about this, but at the same time there had to be a certain amount of superficial Allied solidarity.

What Stalin really wanted was a second front: an attack on the Cherbourg peninsula in France. But this was a mad idea because the troops would have been bottled up on the peninsula and it wouldn't even have distracted any forces from the eastern front, as Stalin argued, because the Germans had enough



A coin showing Carausius, a “brilliant tactician” who forged his own rebel ‘British’ empire in AD 286 and foiled a Roman navy’s best efforts to dislodge him



COVER STORY

THE FIRST BRITISH EMPIRE

In the third century AD, Britain was the epicentre of a massive rebellion that shook the Roman empire to its core. **Kevin Butcher** tells the story of Britannia's usurper emperors

Anyone with a scintilla of interest in Roman history knows the story. While the Roman empire was at its height, Britain was a murky, barbaric backwater – an insignificant rain-soaked outpost shivering on the edge of the known world. But in the late third century AD, at least, this well-worn cliché couldn't have been further from the truth. For, in the 280s and 290s, two men – the brilliant tactician Carausius, and his ruthless successor, Allectus – propelled Britain to the centre of world events. Not only did they lead a breakaway empire from their power base in Britannia, they challenged the very authority of Rome itself.

Carausius and Allectus's story, inasmuch as we can reconstruct it, began when a succession of military rulers reunited a declining Roman empire following a period of political turmoil, only for their short reigns to end in their overthrow and assassination. When, in AD 285, the emperor Carinus was defeated in battle by his rival Diocletian in a river valley in the Balkans, it seemed as if the weary process of rebellion and overthrow would continue indefinitely.

To remain master of the Roman world the victorious Diocletian would need a novel

solution to the empire's ills. Fortunately Diocletian was an energetic reformer. He decided that a deputy ruler was needed to help deal with the rebellions and barbarian invasions facing him and, having no sons of his own, he appointed his old comrade-in-arms, Maximian.

Maximian was sent west, to Gaul, where a peasants' revolt had turned into open war, with cities being ransacked and burned. But the figure who shone most brightly in this war was not Maximian. It was another commander, a man of humble birth called Marcus Aurelius Mausaeus Carausius, who was a native of Menapia, an area corresponding roughly with modern Belgium. Impressed by his skills, Maximian gave Carausius command of the Roman fleet in the Channel and ordered him to clear the sea of Germanic pirates who were plundering coastal settlements. Maximian then departed to wage war against the Germans on the Rhine, and left Carausius to his own devices.

Carausius's campaign against the pirates was highly effective, but somehow he fell out of favour with his superior. In AD 286 word reached Maximian that Carausius was keeping for himself the plunder taken from the pirates, rather than restoring it to its rightful owners. We'll never know if there was any truth to the accusation but the emperor believed it and ordered that Carausius be put to death. Carausius defiantly proclaimed himself emperor in opposition to Maximian and sailed for Britain.

By commandeering Rome's northern fleet and seizing the island of Britain, Carausius placed himself in a strong position. Without ships Maximian could not launch an invasion immediately, and this allowed Carausius to build up his defences. Britain also had three legions, and this combination of ground and naval forces made him a formidable power.

How Carausius established his rule over Britain is lost to us. He may have nurtured links before his usurpation, and it is possible that he had campaigned there in recent years, forging relations with leading figures and the legionary commanders.

Local support would help to explain why Carausius's breakaway British empire was so successful

Local support would help to explain why Carausius's breakaway British empire was so successful. We can see that his authority extended throughout the province, for at Carlisle on Hadrian's Wall a milestone was erected in his name, and his coins are found widely throughout Roman Britain. Excavations at Roman strongholds along the southern and eastern coast of Britain, such as Portchester Castle in Hampshire, have revealed that Carausius had a hand in either building or strengthening these structures.

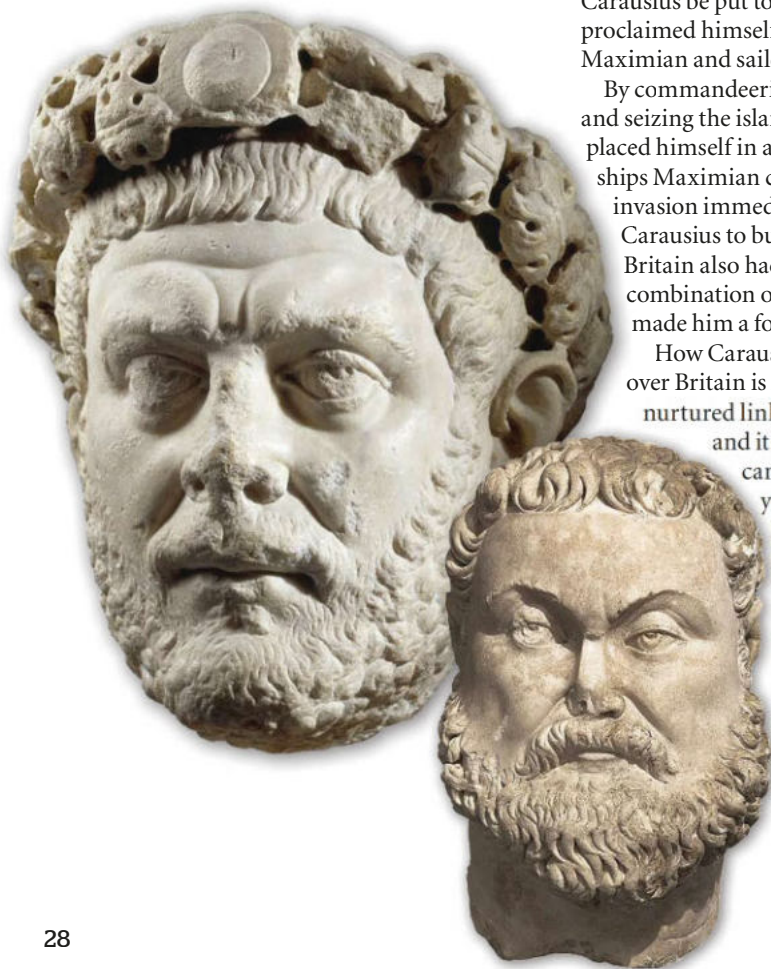
European conquest

Carausius also managed to attract others to his cause. After suppressing piracy in the Channel he was popular with merchants. He had allies among the tribes at the mouth of the Rhine, and even won over a continental legion, denying a swathe of the European coast to Maximian's armies. Soon, Boulogne, Rouen and Amiens had fallen into his hands.

The Roman historian Aurelius Victor, writing about 70 years later, credits Carausius as a skilful commander who protected Britain from warlike peoples – presumably referring to barbarians such as the Germanic pirates rather than Maximian's forces.

Perhaps the most unexpected aspect of Carausius's regime is its cultural pretensions. He flaunted Britain's mineral wealth by minting high quality silver coins, which were not only better than anything the Roman empire had issued for over a century but extraordinarily diverse.

Carausius's portrait looks rather thuggish: a close cropped beard and hair, a bull neck and beetling brow. It's hard to imagine such a man having an interest in high culture. Turn the coins over, though, and we have a remarkable and varied image of Britain as Carausius wanted it. It is true that there are references to military might (legions and ships), but there is a strong emphasis on peace, and even images of rural idyll, such as a milkmaid milking a cow. Many of the designs are highly allusive and would have required a literary education to appreciate their full meaning.



Diocletian (far left), who ruled as Roman emperor from 284–305 with the help of Maximian (left). In the late 280s both men were forced to confront an unexpected threat from Britain

Spending power

Britain's rebel emperors flaunted their might on coins



Capital gains
Allectus, who ruled as a usurper emperor from 293–96, is shown on a gold coin from London



Force of arms
A medallion minted under Carausius shows Victory in a quadriga (a chariot drawn by four horses abreast)



Partners and equals
This coin from c292–93 shows Carausius alongside "his brothers" Diocletian and Maximian



Paradise returns?
A coin bearing the image of Carausius. The RSR on the reverse stands for "the dominions of Saturn return", which was a reference to a golden age that Carausius promised to restore to the empire – from his British base

Some Carausian coins bear the enigmatic letters RSR. For a long time, scholars argued over their meaning – were they a mintmark, or the initials of an official? The solution was provided by the historian Guy de la Bédoyère: it is an abbreviation of *redeunt saturnia regna*, "the dominions of Saturn return" – written three centuries earlier by Virgil in his poem the *Fourth Eclogue*, and a reference to the Golden Age, a kind of Roman version of Eden.

Guy de la Bédoyère's theory was confirmed by a medallion of Carausius, bearing another abbreviation, *INPCDA*, which turns out to be the next line of Virgil's poem, *iam nova progenies caelo demittitur alto*, "now a new generation is let down from high heaven". These literary references – together with other Carausian coin inscriptions, such as *revonat(or) romano(rum)*, "restorer of the Romans" – indicates that Carausius's regime was familiar with Virgil's poetry, and perhaps expected a literate audience in Britain to understand the abbreviations. They suggested that Carausius would restore Rome to its Golden Age – not from Italy, but from Britain.

To do so, Carausius needed to defend Britain from those who controlled Rome. By AD 289, Maximian was preparing his

invasion force, building a fleet and training sailors. A speech extolling him survives from this time, and foresees a glorious victory over the "pirate" Carausius. But it was not to be. Another speech in Maximian's praise, composed two years later, passes over Carausius in silence. The attempt at invasion had evidently failed, and Maximian's fleet had been bested or destroyed. That much we know from the fourth-century historian Eutropius, who bluntly tells us that Carausius's military experience had prevailed. Maximian was forced to arrange an ignominious peace.

'Brothers' at war

Peace and accommodation may have been what Carausius had wanted all along. Once again, his coins provide evidence of his intentions. Carausius is shown shoulder to shoulder with Diocletian and Maximian (see coin above), as their partner and equal. *Carausius et fratres sui*, reads the accompanying inscription ("Carausius and his brothers"). And, in an attempt to acknowledge Diocletian as the senior emperor, another coin reads, *augustus cum Diocletiano* ("To the emperors with Diocletian" – referring to himself and Maximian).



Our map shows the approximate extent of Carausius's empire (AD 286–93)

But Diocletian had no intention of recognising Carausius as a colleague. He would appoint his co-rulers, and would not have the decision forced on him.

Carausius's victory was a threat to Diocletian's authority. In AD 290 or 291 he met with Maximian to confer on a strategy to deal with the British usurper. Maximian was heavily engaged fighting Germans on the

IN CONTEXT

Roman Britain's century of chaos

For the Roman empire, the third century AD was a time of political unrest, usurpations and barbarian invasions. For a few decades it looked as if the Roman empire was on the brink of disintegration as rival emperors struggled for supreme power or declared themselves independent.

Contemporary historical sources are scarce. Historians are often forced to reconstruct events of the period from chance finds – coins, inscriptions and the occasional references in ancient literature. The reigns of Carausius and Allectus are no exception.

For much of the third century, Britain survived the troubles relatively unscathed. There are even signs of the province's increasing self-sufficiency and prosperity. From AD 260–73 it became part of a breakaway empire established in Gaul under the rebel emperors Postumus, Victorinus and then Tetricus.

In the later part of the century Britain began to suffer from attacks by Germanic raiders, and after the fall of this 'Romano-Gallic' empire in 273 the central powers may not have offered effective protection. The growing economic independence of Britain could have paved the way for political and military separatism born of disillusionment with Rome. There are hints of a failed British usurpation during the reign of Probus (AD 276–82), only a few years before Carausius's rebellion succeeded. The sentiments that created the first British empire may have been in the making well before Carausius.

This third-century decoration from a Roman sheath (possibly for a dagger) was found at Cophthall Court in London



Pevensey Castle in East Sussex incorporates parts of a fort employed by Emperor Allectus to defend Britain from an assault by the Roman navy

Rhine frontier, so Diocletian decided to appoint two new deputy emperors – but Carausius was not to be one of them.

Maximian's deputy was Flavius Valerius Constantius, nicknamed Chlorus, or 'Paleface'. An extremely gifted commander, Constantius's brief was to destroy the British empire. But to invade Britain he would first need to conquer Carausius's continental possessions. He began by laying siege to Carausius's port at Boulogne (AD 293), which he captured more by luck than by skill when an ineffective mole he built to blockade the harbour fooled the defenders into surrendering. Then Constantius's luck got even better. At some point, either shortly before or after the siege of Boulogne, news came that Carausius was dead.

A malignant foil

The circumstances of Carausius's end are unclear, but the historical tradition implicates Allectus, the very man who succeeded Carausius as Britain's second Roman emperor. If we know little about Carausius, we know even less about Allectus. Aurelius Victor tells us only that Carausius had placed him in charge of the treasury, but that he was caught embezzling, and killed Carausius to avoid punishment. Eutropius says merely that Allectus was Carausius's ally.

Maximian and Constantius may have concocted the story of Allectus's treachery in order to present their new opponent as an out-and-out villain. And that is his enduring reputation: a malignant foil to the gallant figure of Carausius. There are even hints in a speech praising Constantius that Allectus acted on the instructions of Maximian and Constantius, hoping to be recognised as

co-emperor. Whether Allectus killed Carausius or not, the fact that he remained on the throne would suggest that he had plenty of support in Britain itself.

If Allectus imagined that by disposing of Carausius his enemies would recognise him, he was sorely mistaken. Even so, Constantius needed more ships to take on Allectus's navy, and they would have to be built. It gave Allectus precious breathing space.

Evidence of Allectus's preparations have been found at Pevensey Castle, near Eastbourne in East Sussex. Excavations in the medieval keep at the eastern end revealed the foundations of a Roman wall with wooden stakes driven into the ground. The timbers could be dated quite closely to AD 280–300 – the time of Carausius and Allectus. Coins of the two British emperors were also found. It suggests that Allectus was strengthening his defences, building on the legacy of Carausius.

When it came, the invasion was two-pronged. In AD 296 Constantius set out from Boulogne with one part of the fleet, while his praetorian prefect, Julius Asclepiodotus,

Britain, the island at the edge of the world, had been **restored to Rome**, and Carausius' powerful fleet was back in Roman hands



ABOVE: A relief panel on the Great Ludovisi sarcophagus in Rome depicts a battle scene in the third century. INSET: A Londoner kneels before Constantius I on a gold medallion commemorating the emperor's victory over Allectus in AD 296

sailed from the mouth of the river Seine with the other. But it was the British weather, rather than strategy, that proved decisive.

Part of Allectus's fleet lay stationed off the Isle of Wight, ready to intercept the approaching force. Yet fog hid Asclepiodotus's ships and he was able to sail past unimpeded, eventually landing somewhere in Southampton Water. Asclepiodotus then gave the order to burn the ships, committing his forces to the war in Britain, and marched inland, perhaps hoping to capture London.

Allectus, realising that he had been caught off guard, abandoned his coastal defences and set off with his army to block Asclepiodotus's advance, but he was overwhelmed by the invading forces and cut down. The battle was over before Constantius even arrived.

The recovery of Britain is celebrated on the famous Arras Medallion – the largest of all Roman gold coins to survive to this day (shown above) – which depicts Constantius's triumphant entry into London. *Reddatur lucis*

aeternae, the inscription reads, “the restoration of eternal light” (after the ‘darkness’ of Carausius and Allectus). Constantius is shown riding beside a ship to the gates of London, with a Londoner kneeling in supplication before him. Britain, the island at the edge of the world, had been restored to Rome. More importantly, Carausius's powerful fleet was back in Roman hands.

Carausius and Allectus lived in a particularly obscure period of Roman history, and Diocletian and his colleagues did all they could to expunge them from history. Their coinage was probably demonetised and any monuments to them destroyed.

However, this alone cannot explain why they scarcely figure in the national consciousness today; after all, we have made heroes of equally remote historical figures. Past attempts to incorporate them in a national narrative failed to take hold. In the 12th century Geoffrey of Monmouth retold their story in garbled form and, 600 years later, the antiquarian William Stukeley used Carausius's coins to show how Britain had once succeeded as a great naval power (both writers had a wild imagination!)

The Victorians far preferred the ‘High’ Roman period of Augustus and Hadrian (which they regarded as a model of empire) to the perceived decadence of the third and

fourth centuries. Carausius and Allectus had nothing to say to the myth-makers of that age – and maybe, as an immigrant from the continent, Carausius was deemed unsuitable.

Yet as the first rulers to demonstrate that Britain could operate as an independent economic and naval power, Carausius and Allectus deserve to be better known. They represent an axial moment in the history of these islands, though the facts are scarce.

Even their ultimate failure to hold on to Britain is a potent legacy. The success of Diocletian's new Roman empire depended heavily on the British empire's defeat and, had Allectus's fleet intercepted Asclepiodotus off the Isle of Wight in AD 296, history might have taken a very different course. Constantian would have been discredited; his son, Constantine the Great, might never have become emperor after him. And there might have been no Christian Roman empire at all. **II**

Kevin Butcher is professor of classics and ancient history at the University of Warwick. His books include *Roman Syria and the Near East* (J Paul Getty Trust, 2004)

DISCOVER MORE

BOOK

► **Carausius and Allectus: The British Usurpers** by PJ Casey (Batsford, 1994)

Luther's legacy

It's nearly 500 years since Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses to a church door in Germany and sparked a religious revolution. Discover the man behind the modern Protestant church and see the historic sites of his legacy for yourself

On the 31 October 1517, one man was rumoured to have bravely defied the ruling Catholic agenda by nailing his writings to the door of All Saints' Church in Wittenberg. Protesting the practice of selling penance for large sums of money, on that day the German theologist Martin Luther set the wheels in motion for the Reformation, which divided the church and led to the creation of the Protestant movement as we know it today.

Born the son of a copper miner in 1483, Luther's father had high hopes for him in his early life, pushing him to become a lawyer. However, on attending the University of Erfurt in 1501, he found himself drawn to philosophy, but became dissatisfied with the discipline's emphasis on reason, as he believed human logic could not be applied to God.

His life changed forever on 2 July 1505 when he was riding to university on horseback. A lightning bolt struck near him and, terrified of death, he cried out, "Help, Saint Anna, and I will become a monk." Having survived and not wanting to break his vow, two weeks later he sold all his books, left law school and entered an order of Augustinian monks. By 1512 he had been awarded a doctorate and started publishing profusely, including his landmark work the 95 Theses.

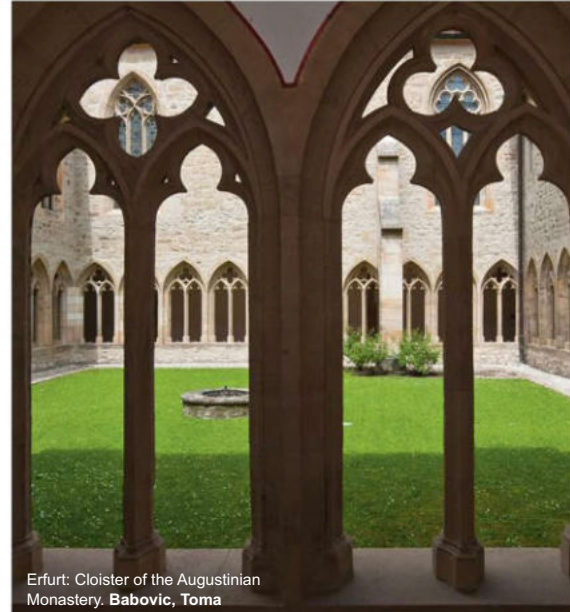
A determined man, he stood by his objections to the Catholic Church despite threats and hardship. He was excommunicated in 1520, then subsequently arrested and exiled, with a decree in 1521 stating it would be illegal for anyone in Germany to give Luther food or shelter and permitted civilians to kill him without legal consequence.

But by 1526, though, Luther started to create his own church and began work on a German translation of the New Testament, believing the bible should be read in one's own language. He also wrote many hymns, influencing the practice of singing in church, and the composer Bach transformed songs such as A Mighty Fortress is Our God and Were God Not With Us At This Time into church cantatas in the 18th century.

Although marred by allegations of anti-Semitism and controversy, by the time of his death in 1546, his influence had already spread throughout Northern Europe and his teachings became influential in Britain under Edward VI and Elizabeth I. Currently, there are more than 900 million Protestants worldwide, all standing as testament to one man's courage to challenge the system.



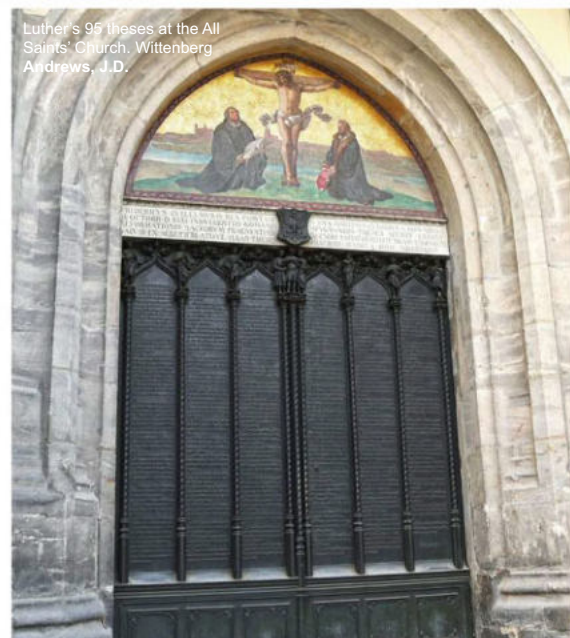
Lutherstadt Eisleben:
room where Luther died,
with the original pall from his
coffin. Wille, Tobias



Erfurt: Cloister of the Augustinian
Monastery. Babovic, Toma



Eisenach: Wartburg.
Bildarchiv Monheim GmbH



Luther's 95 theses at the All
Saints' Church. Wittenberg
Andrews, J.D.

Trace the journey

With well-preserved architecture and a grand sense of history, the many sites that chronicle Martin Luther's life are still standing today. Visit them yourself to catch a glimpse of some of Germany's best preserved medieval towns.

Eisleben/Saxony-Anhalt

The town's Neustadt area was in the 14th century where miners like Luther's father came for work and, Luther was born and died here. He was christened at St Peter and Paul Church and gave his last sermon at the St Andreas Church – both of which are still in use today. Additionally, Luther's 'Birth House' and 'Death House' have been declared UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

“With well-preserved architecture and a grand sense of history”

Mansfeld / Saxony-Anhalt

Luther attended the local school here between 1488 and 1496, but the original building had to be torn down and rebuilt in 2000 due to structural problems. His parents' house, though, is preserved and has been opened as a museum. Luther also acted as an altar server at the St George Parish Church nearby.

Eisenach / Thuringia

Between 1498 and 1501, the young Martin Luther attended the St. George's Latin school in Eisenach in preparation for his studies at the University of

Erfurt. The Martin Luther monument in the town has reliefs depicting events of his life leading up to and including his stay in Eisenach as well as the title of one of his most famous hymns, A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.

Erfurt / Thuringia

In 1501, Luther moved to Erfurt to go to the university, finishing in 1509 with a doctorate degree. After 1505, he lived in the Augustinian Monastery and then, in 1507, he became a priest at Erfurt Cathedral. On leaving the town, the ideas of his Protestant Reformation found its way to Erfurt in 1521.

Wittenberg / Saxony-Anhalt

Luther took up a lecturing position at the University of Wittenberg in 1508. It is here on the doors of All Saints' Church, Luther is said to have nailed his 95 Theses in 1517. The church was seriously damaged by fire in 1760 during a bombardment by the French during the Seven Years' War, but was restored in the 19th century. The church's bronze entrance bears the Latin text of the theses and Luther is interred in a tomb within the church walls.

Wartburg Castle / Thuringia

This imposing castle was built in the Middle Ages and it's here Luther was hidden by Frederick the Wise to protect him from exile. In 1521-22, Luther started the translation of the New Testament from Greek into German, in what was an important step both for the Reformation and the development of a consistent German standard language.

2017 marks the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. To find out more about Germany's fascinating historical Luther towns visit germany.travel/luther

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'SHATTERS THE MANY MYTHS ABOUT HENRY VIII'S LONG-SUFFERING FIRST WIFE'
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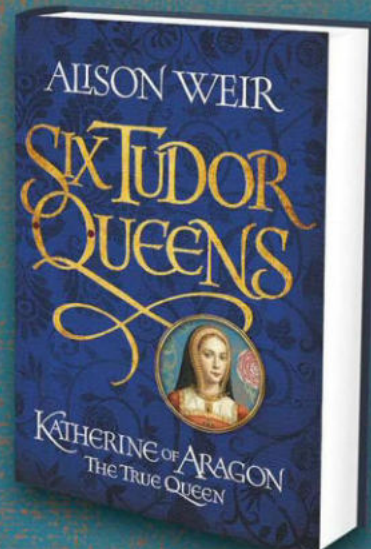
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THE **HISTORY** ESSAY



Margaret Thatcher in front of what was the largest Union Flag in Britain – in Cowes on the Isle of Wight – during the 1983 general election campaign. “She was no less a product of her times than anyone else,” says Dominic Sandbrook

THERE WAS MORE TO THE 80s THAN MAGGIE

The Iron Lady casts a long shadow but the decade she symbolises was shaped by immense forces far beyond her control

By Dominic Sandbrook

Accompanies Dominic's forthcoming BBC Two series *The 80s*



The eighties. The decade of Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev, the Los Angeles Olympics and the Chernobyl disaster; the decade of Michael Jackson and Madonna; mobile phones and home computers; Solidarity, the Ayatollah Khomeini and Tiananmen Square; the decade the Challenger

exploded, the IRA bombed Brighton and the Berlin Wall came down. In Britain we remember the eighties as a uniquely conflicted and controversial decade, when event piled on event with dizzying speed: the years of Heysel and Hillsborough, Steve Davis and Daley Thompson, Duran Duran and Culture Club, *Brookside* and *Blockbusters*. In 1980 the economy plunged into the deepest recession since the Great Depression. A year later, Brixton and Toxteth saw the worst urban rioting in living memory. In 1982 Britain sent a task force to reclaim the Falkland Islands from Argentina. In 1984 the miners' strike ripped communities apart and left scars that have never truly healed.

And then, in the second half of the decade, came a succession of enormously controversial changes, from the privatisation of Britain's utilities to the deregulation of the City of London, that fundamentally reshaped the landscape of our political and economic life, creating shock waves that reverberate to this day. It may have become a cliché of modern historical writing to give individual decades their own flavour, their own personality and their own legacy. But nobody, I think, would deny that the eighties *mattered*, or that this was a peculiarly distinctive historical moment, charged with tension and possibility.

What's also true, though, is that in Britain at least, the eighties have become identified with one individual above all. As prime minister from 1979 to 1990, Margaret Thatcher cast a shadow over almost every corner of our national life. Whether lampooned on TV sketch shows or lambasted in bestselling pop anthems, she was simply always there, the great she-elephant – as the Tory dissident Julian Critchley famously called her – lurking at the back of the room. When she died in 2013, the ensuing furore became a national event in its own right. "The woman who divided a nation," read the *Mirror's* headline. "The woman who saved Britain," countered the *Mail*. And for page after page, commentators pored over the records of Britain in the 1980s – the country that, as almost everybody agreed, she had single-handedly defined.

In many ways, though, all this seems remarkably old-fashioned. Scholars

once wrote history books in which individual statesmen were seen as almost superhumanly influential, but such an approach has been out of fashion for more than half a century. When talk turns to, say, the fifties, few people think immediately of Sir Anthony Eden or Harold Macmillan. It would be perfectly possible to write a social or cultural history of sixties Britain while barely mentioning Harold Wilson at all. Indeed, even those two great titans of Victorian politics, Benjamin Disraeli and William Gladstone, now look less transcendently important than they once did. On my shelves there are heavy, monolithic histories of Victorian Britain, published in the last few years, teeming with social and cultural detail, in which Gladstone and Disraeli barely appear at all. Yet for the time being, eighties Britain is the last redoubt of the great man (or rather, great woman) school of history. The Iron Lady presses a button in Downing Street, and a factory explodes in south Wales. She pulls a lever, and a shopping centre miraculously materialises in Gateshead. She destroys Britain; she saves it. Between those two positions, there is no middle ground.

Not long after Mrs Thatcher died, I had coffee with a television producer to discuss making a series about Britain in the 1980s. At that first meeting, I idly mused whether it would be an interesting experiment to write a treatment for the series in which the prime minister never appeared at all. At the time, with the headlines smouldering with passion about her historical legacy, the idea seemed at best eccentric and at worst downright deluded. Yet the more I thought about it, the more I liked it.

We typically think of Mrs Thatcher as a woman who *made* her age, an Oxford chemistry student turned mad scientist, toiling feverishly in the laboratory before emerging, exhausted but triumphant, test-tube in hand. But of course she was no less a product of her times

than anybody else. Even the Conservatives' election victory in 1979, typically seen as the moment she fired the starting gun for the new age of capitalist competition, happened as much despite her as because of her. She was not remotely the country's most popular politician in 1979, lagging well behind the incumbent prime minister, the Labour veteran Jim Callaghan. Indeed, she won in



Like thousands of young Britons, Spandau Ballet's Gary Kemp (far right) craved "comfort and style"

GETTY IMAGES

It is true that few of Maggie's Tory predecessors, with their cut-glass accents and tweedy personas, could have matched her appeal to ambitious suburban voters



Margaret Thatcher gives the King family of Milton Keynes the deeds to their council house in September 1979. Tory legislation enabling council tenants to buy their homes proved hugely popular with working-class voters

1979 not because the country had been converted to her free-market message, but because floating voters wanted to punish the government and the trade unions for the disastrous Winter of Discontent, when public sector workers had walked out en masse in protest at Callaghan's pay curbs.

It is certainly true that Mrs Thatcher tapped a rich vein of aspiration and ambition among younger working-class voters. Her promise to allow voters to buy their own council houses, for example, propelled her to a stunning 11 per cent swing among skilled working-class voters – ironically, a social group who were very hard hit by the collapse of manufacturing in the years that followed. And it is true that very few of her Tory predecessors, with their cut-glass accents and tweedy personas, could have matched the grocer's daughter's appeal to ambitious suburban voters. But it is nonsense to suggest, as so many writers did after her death, that Mrs Thatcher “manufactured” or “unleashed” the power of ambitious individualism. That particu-

lar trend was already gathering pace even before she came to office. She knew how to appeal to it and how to profit from it, but she hardly invented it.

There is a wonderfully revealing passage in the autobiography of Spandau Ballet's guitarist and chief songwriter Gary Kemp, who was just beginning to make a name for himself in the first months of 1979 – at precisely the moment, in other words, when Mrs Thatcher was preparing for power. Born in 1959, Kemp (like so many working-class voters) had grown up in a narrow terraced house, with no indoor bathroom and a brick toilet in the yard. Yet now, like so many of his peers, he dreamed of a better life, a new world of comfort and style and material security. A few years later, after buying his first house in the early 1980s, Kemp gazed at the “church candles and interior magazines on the black enamelled coffee table... with a glass of claret in my hand and something light and choral on the stereo”, and felt a “strong sense of denying everything my family was”. But in that, too,

THE HISTORY ESSAY

As the success of Delia Smith's shows since the early 1970s suggests, Mrs Thatcher didn't create people's love of home, hearth and kitchen appliances. She inherited it



Children play in a skip in Bradford, March 1985. The continuing collapse of manufacturing in the eighties wrecked communities

he was absolutely typical; millions of other people in the mid-1980s felt exactly the same way. Did they take their cue from Mrs Thatcher? Were they merely lab rats, jumping to order as she pressed a button? I don't think so. Many of them probably hardly thought about her at all. And no doubt many of them were not even Conservative voters. Gary Kemp, incidentally, always voted Labour.

In fact, if you wanted to choose a woman who really captured the spirit of Britain in the 1980s, then you could do a lot worse than pick another keen Labour supporter. Like Margaret Thatcher, Delia Smith was an adept media performer, cutting a supremely poised and manicured figure as she lectured the nation in her precise, clipped tones. Like Mrs Thatcher, she appealed above all to middle-class homeowners in suburban Middle England. Indeed, for millions of viewers, it was 'Delia', rather than 'Maggie', who best incarnated the values that were so crucial to British social life at the turn of the decade. When she told viewers of her *Cookery Course* how to pronounce the word 'lasagne' or advised them about the best way to roll spaghetti onto a fork, she was appealing to precisely the same impulses – the love of domesticity, the enthusiasm for self-improvement – that propelled many voters into the Conservative column in 1979.

In particular, both Delia Smith and Margaret Thatcher struck a chord with ambitious professional women who were now juggling home and career. "I too know what it's like running a house and running a career. I know what it's like having to live within a budget. I know what it's like having to cope," Mrs Thatcher told *Nationwide's* audience in April 1979. In essence, this was Delia's appeal too. Unlike the elaborate recipes beloved

of TV cooks of the past, her concoctions were quick and simple, perfectly designed for people who were too busy to spend hours slaving over the stove. Perhaps revealingly, Delia saw nothing wrong with using tinned or prepared ingredients, and nothing wrong, either, with using the latest kitchen gadgets.

Despite the collapse of industry and the surge in unemployment, sales of microwave ovens, for example, boomed during the early 1980s. "You are probably reading this sitting at home, maybe with your family around you. In the living room there is almost certainly a television set, probably a colour model. In the kitchen there is more than likely to be a washing machine and almost definitely a fridge," wrote Mrs Thatcher in her new year's message to the nation, published in the *News of the World* at the end of December 1979. It was a typically canny appeal, tapping ordinary people's love of home and hearth, their enthusiasm for gadgets and appliances, their eagerness to keep up with the Joneses. But as the success of Delia Smith's shows since the early 1970s suggests, Mrs Thatcher didn't create this world. She inherited it.

In many ways, in fact, our collective fascination with the figure of the Iron Lady can blind us to the deeper and much more important trends. Take, for example, one of the most controversial episodes from her time in office: the devastating recession of the early 1980s, which saw Britain lose roughly a quarter of its total manufacturing capacity, and the unemployment figures surge to well over 3 million. No fair-minded observer could, I think, deny that Mrs Thatcher's stringent economic medicine, which saw the government adopt punishingly high interest rates and an exceptionally high pound to drive down inflation, took a terrible toll on our national economy. Yet even if some other prime minister had been in power – had, for example, Jim Callaghan called an early election in 1978 and been returned to office – there would still have been a global recession, and the government would still have been compelled to adopt strict policies to defeat inflation. In any case, British industry had been struggling for years. The 1970s had seen one high-profile casualty after another: coal mines, factories, steel works, car plants. Take Margaret Thatcher out of the equation: would the picture have been so different? I don't think so.

What all this reflected, I think, was a deeper historical shift with which we're still struggling to come to terms. The 1980s was an era of seismic industrial change, in which the British steel and coal-mining industries, to name just two high-profile examples, were probably doomed anyway. Indeed, if you want to pick out one of the most influential products of the decade, then it was something often dismissed at the time as a children's toy or a manufacturer's gimmick – the home computer. One machine in particular, the Sinclair ZX Spectrum, which was launched in April 1982 – the same month that Argentina invaded the Falklands – and sold for £125, caught the imagination of the public. Within a few

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Thanks to the enormous success of the Sinclair ZX Spectrum, Britain led the world in home computer ownership

GETTY IMAGES



By appealing to the nation's enthusiasm for self-improvement, the "supremely poised and manicured" Delia Smith – pictured with a fruit cake in her 80s pomp – became the darling of Middle England

GETTY IMAGES

THE HISTORY ESSAY

With or without Thatcher, the deeper trends – the rise of computers, the advance of globalisation, the decline of manufacturing, the ceaseless march of technological change – were surely irreversible



The Brighton Grand Hotel in the aftermath of the IRA attack. How different would the eighties really have been if Margaret Thatcher had been in the bathroom when the bomb went off?

years, Sinclair had sold more than 5 million Spectrums, an astronomical figure by the standards of the day. In fact, by the middle of the eighties, Britain led the world in home computer ownership, thanks partly to the success of local firms such as Sinclair and Acorn, but also thanks to the government's enthusiastic promotion of computers in schools. And of course what these apparently primitive machines represented was nothing short of a social, technological and economic revolution. Computers created jobs, but they also destroyed them. The abandoned shops that you can see all over Britain today are the casualties of a revolution that began in the 1980s, driven not by politicians or ideology, but by technological change and consumer demand.

So did Mrs Thatcher matter? Well, of course she mattered, but perhaps not as much as we think. One of the pivotal moments in our TV series is the IRA's attempt to assassinate the prime minister at Brighton's Grand Hotel on 12 October 1984, during the Tory party conference. We often forget just how close they came: not only were five people killed that night, but Mrs Thatcher's bathroom was badly damaged, whereas her sitting room – where she was, characteristically, hard at work – was relatively unscathed.

Had the terrorists succeeded, just five years into her time in office, it's tempting to wonder how different Britain might be today. Perhaps the coal strike would have unfolded differently; perhaps privatisation would have ground to a halt; perhaps there would have been a reversion to collectivism, social democracy, heavy industry and the old consensus. But then again, perhaps not. The deeper trends – the rise of computers, the advance of globalisation, the decline of manufacturing, the ceaseless march of technological and cultural change – were surely irreversible. After all, what Britain experienced in the 1980s was hardly unique. Despite what we often think, almost every other industrialised western country went through similar changes in the final decades of the last century. Even in economics, where Mrs Thatcher is seen as a great innovator, other governments – notably those of Australia and New Zealand – were often there first.

The story we tell in our series about Britain in the eighties, therefore, is one in which Mrs Thatcher is no longer the dominant character. She's in it, of course, but a supporting part, rather than as the lead. It's the story of some familiar individuals – Delia Smith and Roland Rat, Arthur Scargill and Derek Trotter, Neil Kinnock and Princess Diana – but the central characters are really the audience themselves. It was ordinary people, not the government, who made council house sales a success, who rushed to buy shares in newly privatised utilities like British Telecom and British Gas, who bought the first microwaves, video recorders and mobile phones, who tucked into Boursin, Perrier and Le Piat d'Or, and who queued in their thousands to get into the first British branches of Ikea at the end of the decade.

Ours is a history of the 1980s driven not by events in Number 10 Downing Street, but by decisions made in millions of other Number 10s, Number 9s and Number 11s up and down the country. For the truth, of course, is that our politicians don't make our history. We do. And if the world we live in today is the world the eighties made, then we only have ourselves to blame. Or to thank. I quite liked the eighties. ■

Dominic Sandbrook is a historian and presenter. His books include *The Great British Dream Factory: The Strange History of Our National Imagination* (Allen Lane, 2015)

DISCOVER MORE

TELEVISION

► Dominic Sandbrook's series **The 80s** is due to air on BBC Two this summer

BOOK

► **Rejoice! Rejoice!: Britain in the 1980s** by Alwyn W Turner (Aurum, 2013)



Next month's essay: Tom Holland on Æthelstan and the creation of England

History under **attack**

Recent conflicts in the Middle East have seen the destruction of some of the region's most important antiquities.

Professor Peter Stone offers his opinion on how we can prevent similar losses of historical treasures in the future

Culture crime

A US tank takes up position outside the plundered National Museum of Iraq, Baghdad in April 2003. "The general breakdown of law and order in Iraq [in the wake of the coalition invasion] heralded almost endemic looting," says Peter Stone



The beginning was not auspicious. The exchange – “Isn’t there some archaeology that we should be avoiding?” “Yes, I know a bloke, I’ll ask him at the weekend” – had taken place in the Ministry of Defence on 29 January 2003, just two months before the USA/UK-led coalition invaded Iraq to enforce ‘regime change’. I was that bloke: the wrong person – I knew little of the detailed archaeology of the region – at the wrong time. Most coalition troops were already ‘in theatre’, objectives set, their maps in hand (with no museums, libraries, archives or archaeological sites marked), and with little appetite for additional tasks, let alone training.

With help from colleagues in the UK and Iraq – we couldn’t mention the latter, as their lives would have been under threat – we produced a list of 36 sites, from the Palaeolithic to Islamic, that were perhaps the most important not to damage. We stressed the vulnerability of these sites in any interregnum, and we emphasised the international humanitarian law (IHL) within which the coalition was obliged to work. Unfortunately, neither the US nor the UK had ratified the primary relevant IHL – the 1954 Hague Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, and its two protocols of 1954 and 1999.

The USA eventually ratified the convention

in 2009. But the UK has still failed to ratify either the convention or protocols, citing lack of parliamentary time as the reason on an annual basis since 2004.

Sadly, the looting of museums, libraries, archives and archaeological sites that followed the invasion is a well-known story. Despite our warnings, all museums and many other cultural institutions were plundered.

The only reasons the impact was less catastrophic than it might have been was the decision by most of the Iraqi army not to mount a credible defence, coupled with the courage of the staff of these institutions who, in some instances going against the direct orders of Saddam Hussein, removed and concealed as much as possible. The archaeological sites fared far worse. The breakdown of law and order heralded, in some parts of the country, almost endemic looting.

It appears to be an accepted fact that cultural property will be damaged. Where there is war, places and things get destroyed

I believe the coalition must accept some of the blame for this. It could have protected museums and other institutions, as it did other vulnerable buildings, such as the central bank and various government ministries. While it would have been impossible to deploy troops to protect *all* archaeological sites, the coalition could have taken practical measures to reduce the looting – by, for example, buying crops that would have given local people greater financial stability. It could have also continued to pay tribal site guards to deter looters.

What we have lost

But what happened in Iraq cannot be blamed entirely on the military. Equally critical was the failure of political planners to understand the importance of cultural property and heritage, especially in the context of a western-led coalition invading a Middle Eastern country. A far more uncomfortable failure must be attributed to the heritage sector, which allowed the close relationship it had developed with the military during the 20th century to wither. We may never know how much we have lost; we will never know how much we could have learnt.

It appears to be an accepted fact that cultural property will be damaged and destroyed during armed conflict. However, military theorists, from Sun Tzu in sixth-century BC China to von Clausewitz in 19th-century Europe, have argued that allowing the cultural property of your enemy to be destroyed – or worse, destroying it on purpose – is bad military practice. This is because it immediately makes a population less easy to govern and provides the first reason for the next conflict.

Protection of cultural property during war was first enshrined in law in the 1863 *Instructions for the Government of Armies of the United States in the Field*, which stated: “Classical works of art, libraries, scientific collections... must be secured against all avoidable injury...”

Fast-forward half a century, and the First World War saw positive action. Capturing Jerusalem in 1917, the British general Edmund Allenby instructed that “every sacred building, monument, holy spot, shrine, traditional site... of the three religions will be maintained and protected”. Showing an understanding of cultural sensitivities, Allenby ensured that Muslim troops from the Indian army were deployed to protect important Islamic sites.

Despite Allenby’s efforts, the First World War wrought enormous damage on European heritage and, as a result, the international community was still debating how to better protect cultural property during conflict on



Ransacked A wrecked sculpture at the National Museum of Iraq. Looters opened the museum vault and grabbed treasures dating back to the dawn of civilisation



Safe keeping American soldiers in Germany, 1945, recover paintings stolen by the Nazis. The Allies went to great lengths to protect cultural property during the Second World War



Casualty of war The remains of an artefact destroyed by the so-called Islamic State in Palmyra, pictured in April this year after the ancient Semitic city was retaken by Syrian government forces

the eve of the Second World War.

From 1939–45, the protection of cultural property was widely regarded as the responsibility of combatants – and the Allies, (as well as some elements of Axis forces) took this responsibility seriously. The Allies’ Monuments Men (officially the ‘Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives’ unit) made enormous efforts to protect cultural property in all theatres of the war. The unit had the full backing of Dwight D Eisenhower, the Supreme Allied Commander, who wrote before the Normandy landings reminding troops that: “Inevitably, in the path of our advance will be found historical monuments and cultural centres which symbolise to the world all that we are fighting to preserve. It is the responsibility of every commander to protect and respect these symbols wherever possible...” Many cultural sites, buildings and collections were destroyed, but the Allies did try to limit the destruction.

Unfortunately, little was done after the war to continue the work of these conscript-soldiers and, despite the 1954 Hague Convention, by 2003 few military forces retained anything other than a superficial expertise, or commitment to, the protection of cultural property. Events in Iraq would, tragically, bear this out.

Cultural property is damaged and destroyed specifically during conflict for all kinds of reasons. Sometimes protection is not regarded as important enough to include in pre-conflict planning. At other times it is regarded as a legitimate ‘spoil of war’, or it becomes collateral damage. Throw in a lack of military awareness, looting, ‘enforced neglect’

and specific targeting, and you have a potent combination of threats.

While perhaps little can be done about the last two of these, at least under the 1999 2nd Protocol of the 1954 Convention and the 1998 Statute of the International Criminal Court, intentional damage and destruction can now be treated as a war crime. As for the first five threats, they can, and should, be mitigated through a closer relationship between cultural heritage professionals and those groups most involved in conflict – politicians, the military and other emergency agencies. All parties must have a clearer understanding of the multifaceted values of cultural property.

More monuments men

For all that, positive steps *have* been taken – led by Unesco and the Blue Shield, a voluntary organisation frequently referred to as the “cultural equivalent of the Red Cross/Crescent”. For example, Nato is considering developing a cultural property doctrine; the UK and US are actively considering re-establishing units similar to the Monuments Men; European militaries have met annually over the last six years at ‘Coping with Culture’ conferences; the British have had their own ‘Culture in Conflict’ symposium for eight years; a key Nato-affiliated training centre has just published *Cultural Property Protection Makes Sense*; and armed forces from Mali to Cambodia to New Zealand, and across Europe are beginning to integrate cultural property protection into their training.

In another encouraging development, lists of cultural treasures have been produced for Iraq, Libya, Mali, Syria and Yemen – with

clear evidence that such information protected sites in Libya. Meanwhile, two Serbian officers were imprisoned for the 1991 shelling (not justified by military necessity) of the World Heritage site of Dubrovnik. And Ahmad Al Mahdi, an alleged member of the militant Islamist group Ansar Dine, is currently on trial at the International Criminal Court for the destruction of cultural property in Timbuktu in 2012. Of course, heritage is still being targeted specifically as exemplified by the appalling destruction of parts of the World Heritage site of Palmyra by the so-called Islamic State.

In 2015, the UK government, acknowledging the gravity of the situation across the Middle East for cultural property of national and international significance, announced the creation of a Cultural Protection Fund. We need to make sure that this funding is spent in a strategic, coherent way, and I hope the government will deliver on its commitment to ratify the Hague Convention. While cultural heritage experts are never going to stop war, we can perhaps help to better protect our common human heritage. ■



Professor Peter Stone OBE is Unesco chair in cultural property protection and peace at Newcastle University

DISCOVER MORE

EVENT

► On Sunday 19 June, Professor Stone will be a speaker at **Fragile Heritage Focus Day** in York. Find out more at yorkfestivalofideas.com

OUR FIRST WORLD WAR

Battle on land and sea

In part 25 of **Peter Hart's** personal testimony series, we reach June 1916, when North Sea naval battles saw great loss of life and there was an ill-founded British confidence as the battle of Somme loomed. Peter will be tracing the experiences of 20 people who lived through the First World War – via interviews, letters and diary entries – as its centenary progresses

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JAMES ALBON



George Wainford

Born in 1897, George was posted to HMS *Onslaught* of the 12 Destroyer Flotilla in 1916, where he qualified as a torpedoman. On 1 June, the ship was badly hit during the closing stages of the battle of Jutland.

The battle of Jutland was a massive sprawling affair. The action started in the afternoon of 31 May. It proved inconclusive, although three British battlecruisers, the *Indefatigable*, *Queen Mary* and *Invincible*, were torn violently apart, their magazines exploding with a terrible loss of life. The mists obscured much of the action and few men had much idea of what was happening all around them. At around 2am on 1 June, as the German fleet tried to make its escape, HMS *Onslaught* was ordered to attack.

“My job as a torpedoman was to load the torpedoes into the tubes. There was a sort of derrick with a little chain on it. You lift it up and you pushed it in, made certain that the warhead was on correctly and then the chief petty officer, he'd do the actual firing. You had to get a direct bearing on the ship with a direction finder – you had to get the speed of your enemy, your own speed, the angle of the enemy, your angle – all coinciding before you fired. We fired our torpedoes and other ships in the flotilla did the same and there was a terrific explosion and a German ship blew up. “Cor!”, I said: “We got her!”

Two of the torpedoes had struck home, sinking the pre-dreadnought *Pommern*, killing all 839 of her crew. But retribution was swift. German searchlights blazed out and their guns opened a deadly fire. The British destroyers were partially covered by a

“We fired our torpedoes and there was a terrific explosion. I said: ‘We got her!’ The moment I said that, shells hit our bridge”

smoke-screen, but *Onslaught*, the last in the line, was hit hard by German shells.

“...The moment I said that, either one shell or a salvo hit our bridge. There was a terrific bang and a fire started on the port side of the foc'sle where all the hammocks underneath the foc'sle deck were stowed.

The shells tore the bridge apart. For Wainford, still only a youthful sailor, it was a bewildering situation.

“We could hear a lot of crying and talking and shouting, so I went to go up there. Sub-lieutenant Kempis was there, he said: “Where are you going, Wainford?” I said: “On the foc'sle, sir, to help!” He said: “Keep down below out of it!” I thought: “I wonder why he said that?” I found out later the commanding officer was killed, the lieutenant was killed, the warrant officer was killed – that

was the three officers. I think the coxswain at the wheel was killed and there were several more wounded. It was a bit of a shambles really. I saw one chap, it was horrible, his whole stomach was torn open, it was all hanging out and he was trying to push it back – and that's why I was told to keep out of it.

It was left to older, more experienced hands to collect the bodies. Lieutenant commander Arthur Onslow was taken below decks, where young Wainford witnessed his captain's unbearably poignant last words.

“The skipper died in the crew's foc'sle on the mess table. They laid him on there. I'll always remember his last words, he said: “Is the ship all right?” I said: “Yes, Sir, the ship's all right!” He said: “I'll have a little sleep now then.” And that was it. I was there when he died.

The German fleet suffered fewer casualties than the British, but the overall situation was unchanged. The British still controlled the seas and their trade routes still criss-crossed the globe.

A painting depicting the explosion of the battle-cruiser *Queen Mary* during the battle of Jutland





George Ashurst

George, 21, of the 1st Lancashire Fusiliers had been gassed in Ypres and served in Gallipoli. At the end of June he was ready to go over the top on the first day of the battle of the Somme.

It was not just Haig and his generals who were confident. The British had amassed a huge number of guns for the preliminary bombardment. To the men watching, it seemed an awe-inspiring display of artillery might. They could not believe that any German soldiers would survive the deluge of shells crashing down on their trenches. Never had such a barrage been delivered by British guns – it dwarfed all previous efforts in its size. One of those watching in awe was Corporal George Ashurst.

“Me and the officer we walked down our front line. We were just standing looking at the German lines and we could see the bursts of the shells – all over – big ones in the distance. We could see the dirt from the sandbags dancing up and down.

Then you could turn about and all along the skyline you would see flashes: big flashes, little flashes, hundreds of them all along the skyline. Over the top there was a roar like a score of trains going all at once over the top of your head, you could hear them whizzing over. I thought: “This will certainly shift Jerry – he’ll never stand up against a thing like this!”

As the last hours ticked away, the eyes of the world would be fixed on the great attack planned for 07.30 on 1 July.



Kate Luard

Londoner Kate, born in 1872, trained as a nurse. She had already served in the Boer War when in 1916 she again volunteered and was immediately dispatched to France.

For nursing sister Kate at No 6 Casualty Clearing Station in the village of Barlin behind the Arras front, the days seemed an endless series of tragedies – each one heart-breaking in its own right.

“A gunner who had one leg amputated two days ago had to decide this morning whether he would have the other one off or die. At first he wanted to die because he “couldn’t face his wife with both legs gone” and what was he to do for a living? He lay there with white lips looking into a black future out of a hideous present. It seemed almost too big and grim a question to persuade a man about, but we told him what his wife would say. Now it is over and he is quite brave and a wee bit better. There would be many more such scenes before the year was out. **H**

Peter Hart is the oral historian at the Imperial War Museum

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TV AND RADIO

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Sir Douglas Haig

In December 1915, Haig was appointed to command the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) on the western front. By June 1916, he had overseen the planning for the battle of the Somme and the great preliminary bombardment commenced on 24 June 1916.

Haig’s French allies, led by the redoubtable General Joseph Joffre, were insistent that the British must launch their major attack on the Somme at the start of July. Haig had no room to manoeuvre. The ground and timing had been chosen by the French, who were desperate for the BEF to relieve the pressure on their Verdun front. What did Haig hope to achieve?

“My policy is briefly to:
1. Train my divisions, and to collect as much ammunition and as many guns as possible. 2. To make arrangements to support the French attacking in order to draw off pressure from Verdun, when the French consider the military situation demands it. But while attacking to help our Allies, not to think that we can for a certainty destroy the power of

Germany this year. We must aim at improving our positions with a view to making sure of the result of campaign next year.

The die was cast. The British were about to fight their first continental-scale battle in the modern age. They would at last be pitted directly against the main enemy, Germany. Haig himself was optimistic.

“The weather report is favourable for tomorrow. With God’s help, I feel hopeful for tomorrow. The men are in splendid spirits: several have said that they have never before been so instructed and informed of the nature of the operation before them. The wire has never been so well cut, nor the artillery preparation so thorough. I have seen personally all the corps commanders and one and all are full of confidence.

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BRITAIN'S TOP HISTORIANS ANSWER **HISTORY'S BIG QUESTIONS**

You are reading our 200th issue. And, to mark the occasion, we thought we'd ask the likes of Ian Kershaw, Kate Williams and Dan Snow to answer some of the most pressing questions about the past in 200 words...

Compiled by Rob Attar and Matt Elton

What historical mystery would you love to solve?

RICHARD OVERY

“ One of the historical mysteries that still remains unresolved after decades of research is the question of whether Adolf Hitler ever did give an order, written or verbal, for the genocide of the Jews. It was a puzzle that I thought I could solve more than 20 years ago, when a German count offered the *The Observer* exclusive rights to a

set of Hitler documents that had apparently lain hidden in a bank deposit box in Vienna since the end of the war.

It was an exciting moment: there were pages, allegedly by Hitler, explaining the decisions he reached in 1941 about the Jews,

about declaring war on the United States, even, if I recall well enough, about Rudolf Hess and his zany flight. A quick glimpse showed that they were all forgeries. And a comparison of the handwriting showed that they were very poor forgeries.

Going down in the lift after a tense confrontation, the count asked me why the British and Germans had not fought together against communism instead of against each other. That was less of a mystery. But finding that genocidal smoking gun is still something that historians of the Holocaust hope might be out there somewhere.

Richard Overy (pictured above) is professor of history at the University of Exeter. He is currently writing a history of the Second World War



27 February 1933: The Reichstag building in Berlin burns after a suspected arson attack

TRACY BORMAN

“ For me, the most compelling mystery is whether Elizabeth I really was the Virgin Queen. This was the source of endless speculation among her courtiers, and has remained the subject of intense debate ever since.

Although there were numerous men whose names were connected to Elizabeth, the one who sparked by far the greatest amount of gossip was Robert Dudley. They had been friends since childhood, Dudley having been among the companions of Elizabeth's brother Edward. Their relationship, which grew more intense in adulthood, would endure for almost half a century. They would often meet in secret, and Elizabeth even had Dudley's apartments moved next to her own at court. Then, in 1587, a young man arrived at the Spanish court claiming to be their illegitimate son.

But would Elizabeth, who had fought so hard for the throne and who, thanks to her turbulent childhood, had grown to equate sex with death, really have taken such a risk as to sleep with Dudley – or, indeed, any of her other favourites? It is unlikely that we will ever know for certain. But that doesn't stop me fantasising about discovering an unknown letter in the archives that finally solves the mystery.

Tracy Borman (left) is the author of *The Private Lives of the Tudors* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2016)



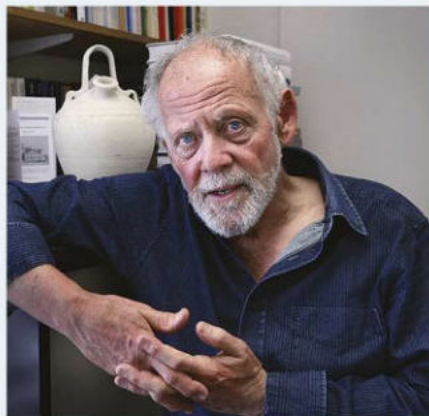
ROGER MOORHOUSE

“ The mystery that I'd like to solve is the most enduring enigma of the Third Reich: the story behind the Reichstag fire. As readers will know, the Reichstag – the German parliament building in Berlin – was burnt out in an arson attack on 27 February 1933, only a month after Adolf Hitler was appointed chancellor. In the aftermath, the Nazis exploited the event as proof of an attempted communist revolt and clamped down on the political left in Germany, suspending civil liberties along the way. The fire, therefore, effectively laid the foundation for Hitler's dictatorship.

But who started it? The man caught at the scene, the Dutch communist Marinus van der Lubbe, was tried and executed, and the circumstantial evidence that implicated him is hard to refute. But was he acting alone? And if not, on whose orders did he start the fire?

For some, the suspicion remains that he was just a 'patsy', someone who was forced to do the Nazis' dirty work for them. Personally, I am instinctively wary of conspiracy theories, but one thing is for sure: the controversy surrounding the Reichstag fire is still with us, more than eight decades after the event.

Roger Moorhouse's latest book is *The Devils' Alliance: Hitler's Pact with Stalin, 1939–1941* (Bodley Head, 2014)



Which person from the past would you most like to meet?

BARRY CUNLIFFE

“ I would choose Pytheas of Massalia (Marseilles), a remarkable explorer who in around 320 BC made an epic journey to the north-western extremity of Europe, circumnavigating Britain and possibly visiting Iceland and the amber-producing coast of Jutland on the way.

How he journeyed, we can only guess but there are hints that he went overland to the west coast of France and there joined the first of a succession of local boats taking him to Brittany and then around Britain before returning home to write an account of his discoveries, *On the Ocean*. The book was a source of wonder to contemporaries but no copy has survived and we know of it only from quotations by later classical writers.

Pytheas was a keen observer, writing about everything he saw – the fierce tidal surges of the Atlantic, the market where tin was traded in Cornwall and the frozen seas in the extreme north where the sun never sets. He was also a skilled scientist, able to judge the distance he had travelled north by reference to the sun's height at midday on the solstice, and to accurately assess the size of Britain. What amazing tales he would have had to tell!

Barry Cunliffe (above) is an archaeologist and the author of *By Steppe, Desert, and Ocean: The Birth of Eurasia* (OUP, 2015)

How should history influence our lives today?

IAN KERSHAW

“ There has been no more important decision in recent times than whether Britain should remain in the EU. The future is at stake. But in approaching this decision, some history might help.

It is worth considering that we joined what was then the European Economic Community from a position of national weakness. By the 1960s Britain had been overtaken by the rapidly growing continental economies. Trade with the Commonwealth had shrunk drastically and membership of the European Free Trade Association had not provided the antidote. In 1973, when Britain finally joined the European Economic Community, the economy was in even worse shape, with high inflation and industrial unrest. National interest lay, it seemed, in exploiting the more successful common market in western Europe.

Britons continued for years to speak, tellingly, of the 'Common Market', as if what they had joined was purely a trading arrangement. But Britain had knowingly signed up to what was from the outset a political as well as economic project. Some pooling of sovereignty was regarded as necessary to prevent the extremes of nationalism that had taken Europe to catastrophe. Is this now just history? Britain felt it needed Europe then. Does it no longer?

Ian Kershaw (pictured) is the author of *To Hell and Back: Europe, 1914–1949* (Allen Lane, 2015)



Sir Walter Raleigh's *History of the World* was intended to educate a young Prince Henry



MICHAEL SCOTT

“ Sir Walter Raleigh began writing his *History of the World*, while imprisoned in the Tower of London in the early 1600s. It was intended to be a global history from ancient times and to educate Raleigh's patron, the young Prince Henry, to be a good ruler by giving him a wide knowledge of history and its important players at a moment when the boundaries of the known world were rapidly expanding.

History writing – particularly global history writing – has been used as a way of educating rulers since ancient times. In recent centuries, however, we've also used it to help rectify or learn from the wrongs of the past: global history in the 20th century was a direct attempt to turn humanity away from further world conflict.

In today's era of deep and ongoing world connectivity, global history should speak not simply to those in power, but to us all. It helps us to understand the variety of cultures and traditions that have always made up human civilisation. It helps us to respect and discuss difference. And crucially, in an era too often fragmented by political and religious divides, it reminds us how much we owe to interactions with others.

Michael Scott's next book, *Ancient Worlds: An Epic History of East and West*, will be published by Hutchinson in July

What is the biggest misconception in your field?

ALISON WEIR

“The biggest misconception in my field concerns Richard III. No historical character seems to attract so much controversy or such polarised, forcefully held opinions – but frequently these are not based on evidence in contemporary sources. I know, from what I hear at events or read online, that too often these opinions are drawn from fiction. One reader wrote: “Richard did not kill the princes in the Tower. Read Philippa Gregory’s *The White Queen* – it’s all in there.” Although it’s an admirable novel, it is fiction, and nobody should base historical conclusions on fiction, however well researched.

One also comes up against a worrying lack of objectivity. “I don’t care what anyone says,” one Ricardian told me, preparing to hear the views of an eminent array of historians, “I’m not going to change my opinion!” But you can’t start with an opinion and fit the facts around it. You have to look at the evidence and learn and infer what you can from it – and you must be prepared to change your conclusions in the light of new research. Too many views of Richard are based on emotion, and there can be no room for that in serious historical study.

Alison Weir (pictured) is a historian and author whose latest book is *Six Tudor Queens: Katherine of Aragon, The True Queen* (Headline Review, 2016)



This colourful Jami’ al-tawarikh miniature depicts a battle between the Mongol and Jin Jurchen armies in north China, 1211

RANA MITTER

“For much of the late 20th century, there was a perception that China had to be viewed as closed-off from the rest of the world. In the west, this was partly because of the Mao Zedong era, when China really was hard to access; partly because of the US’s decision to isolate China from 1949 to the early 1970s; and also because of China’s politics, including the violent Cultural Revolution.

But all major recent research trends have been in the opposite direction, showing how open China has been over the *longue durée*. The Selden Map of China in the Bodleian Library dates from 1604 and shows that early modern China had substantial trade relations with south-east Asia and beyond. During the 20th century, China worked extensively with experts from the League of Nations to develop its agricultural and industrial economy.

As recently as 1988, the series *River Elegy*, broadcast to 100 million viewers, advocated watering the “yellow earth” of China with the “blue water” of the Pacific – a reference to a body of water that stretched all the way to America. China is in a more inward-looking phase right now, to be sure. But history suggests it won’t last.

Rana Mitter is the author of *China’s War with Japan, 1937–1945: The Struggle for Survival* (Allen Lane, 2013)

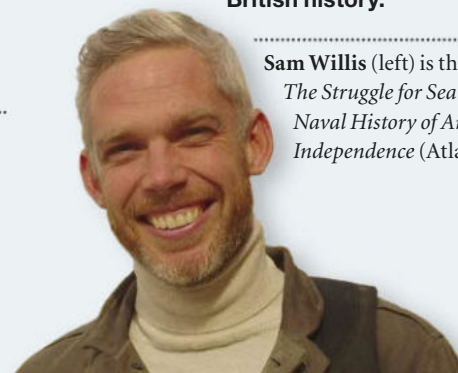
SAM WILLIS

“The single biggest misconception in British naval history is that ‘Britain Ruled the Waves’. There are numerous significant examples of Britain not ruling the waves but the most important, without any doubt, is the loss of the American colonies in the War of American Independence of the late 18th century.

The British began that war with the largest, most powerful and most successful navy in the world and there were more fleet battles in that war than in any other in the 18th century, and we still lost: America is independent *because* our ships and naval strategy and naval command were inadequate between 1777 and 1782. The story of naval history, particularly in that period – though this is applicable to all periods of naval history – is one of constant struggle.

We tried and we repeatedly failed as much as – if not far more than – we succeeded. Our successes stand out *because* they were so unusual and surprising and worth celebrating. Difficulty and failure and chaos and death and accidents were the norm. ‘Ruling the waves’ was impossible and to think in those terms is to cast an entirely false perspective onto one of the most important subjects in British history.

Sam Willis (left) is the author of *The Struggle for Sea Power: A Naval History of American Independence* (Atlantic, 2015)





JERRY BROTTON

“Many people studying the Tudors believe the period is defined by what happened exclusively within the British Isles and, occasionally, influences from Europe, such as Lutheranism and Calvinism.

This is a profound misconception that misses out exchanges with other cultures. Most importantly, it disregards the exchanges with the Islamic world that took place especially during Elizabeth I's reign, which had a significant bearing on her foreign policy and domestic economy. Following her excommunication by Pope Pius in 1570, Elizabeth reached out to the Ottoman and Persian empires, as well as the Moroccan kingdom, which led to the creation of the Barbary and Levant companies. This transformed Elizabethan tastes, from the sugar that people consumed and the sweet wines they drank to the silks that they wore.

Diplomatically, these Anglo-Islamic alliances played a significant role in keeping the Spanish at bay throughout Elizabeth's reign, as she positioned merchants and diplomats throughout north Africa, the Mediterranean and Persia. The Tudor-Islamic alliance is only part of the story of this period, but it's an element we diminish at our peril – especially in the context of today's tragic conflicts in the Middle East and the lack of historical understanding that characterises all sides.

Jerry Brotton is professor of renaissance studies at Queen Mary University of London, and author of *This Orient Isle: Elizabethan England and the Islamic World* (Allen Lane, 2016)



Teenagers in Tottenham, London, 1954. “History is your parents spotting each other across the dancefloor,” says Dan Snow

Why do you love history?

DAN SNOW

“I love history because it's an infinite reservoir of stories, examples, warnings, explanations, jokes, rebukes and inspiration. It is everything – the most interesting things that have ever happened to anyone who has ever lived. History is Galileo first glimpsing Jupiter's moons, Lennon meeting McCartney, the Bruce fighting single combat at Bannockburn, Ada Lovelace's first algorithm, Elizabeth at Tilbury, Genghis storming Beijing, Zidane raising the World Cup, Edward II's lavish parties, my first kiss as a teenager, your parents spotting each other across the crowded dancefloor, Rome falling, the dome of St Paul's rising.

Love history and you can gossip about the world's most outrageous characters, laugh at the strangest events, quake with horror at mankind's most appalling excesses. History expands your own set of experiences to encompass anyone who has ever lived. You can sit day-dreaming in a traffic jam looking back, not at your own 20s, but the far more interesting younger years of Alexander the Great.

The past creates the present. It is utterly impossible to understand or navigate the world unless you understand history. Don't believe me? Book a boozy beach holiday in Somalia or sing 'God Save the Queen' in a pub in Crossmaglen in Armagh.

Dan Snow is a historian and broadcaster who appears regularly on BBC television



A Turkish miniature shows traders in the 16th century. Many of their wares would have ended up in Tudor England

What is the greatest historical discovery of your lifetime?

DIARMAID MACCULLOCH

“ My most exciting discovery was an entire Tudor rebellion! Historians have always known of two contrasting risings in 1549: the ‘Prayer Book rebellion’ in the West Country and Kett’s rebellion in Norfolk, both brutally suppressed by government forces. There were vague indications of echoes elsewhere, but they seemed no more than noises. Trawling through lawsuits dated to Henry VIII’s reign, I found a vivid reference to a large-scale rebellion in Suffolk, realised the document had been wrongly filed, and started looking for other clues in the National Archives.

Months of sifting yielded a whole series of scattered allusions to the same rising, homing in on 1549. Kett’s tragedy had been just part of a wider explosion, everywhere producing mass popular assemblies in ‘camps’; contemporaries called it ‘the camping time’. Suffolk’s camps had been deliberately forgotten after the authorities managed to disperse them without bloodshed, and modern historians had failed to pull together the evidence lying in disorganised bits in front of them. Now we know that the mayhem spread all through southern England, the Midlands and up to Yorkshire. This find came early in my research career, and now Lady Luck owes me an equally satisfying retirement present.

Diarmaid MacCulloch (right) is professor of the history of the church at the University of Oxford. His collected essays *All Things Made New: Writings on the Reformation* will be published by Allen Lane in July



A macaque washes a sweet potato, a skill that has been passed down the generations

FELIPE FERNANDEZ-ARMESTO

“ It happened on the Japanese island of Koshima in 1953, when zoologists saw a monkey genius – a two-year old female whom they called Imo – display precocious talents. Until then, the macaques in her tribe had prepared sweet potatoes by scraping the dirt off. But Imo found out how to rinse them in water. She passed the knowledge on until most of the tribe had mastered the idea. Eventually, only a few old males failed to adopt the practice. To this day, the monkeys of Imo’s tribe wash their sweet potatoes, and teach their youngsters to do the same, even if you give them ready-washed specimens off a supermarket shelf. So the custom seems not only to have been transmitted by learning but also to have survived its usefulness – becoming ‘pure’ culture, like the perpetuation of a rite.

Imo showed that we are not alone: there are other cultural species out there. If historians were alert to the implications they would see that Imo’s discovery overthrew the traditional limits of the discipline. History extends beyond humanity, and to understand cultural behaviour in humans – which is the core of historians’ work – we have to explore and compare the way non-human lives change.

Felipe Fernandez-Armesto is the author of *A Foot in the River: Why Our Lives Change* and *the Limits of Evolution* (OUP, 2015)

PAUL CARTLEDGE

“ One candidate must be the decipherment of the script unromantically labelled ‘Linear B’. This was the achievement ultimately of an amateur, Michael Ventris, with a good deal of help from many other scholars, above all the Cambridge classicist John Chadwick. It was made public in 1952, when I was five.

The discovery that Linear B was devised to record an early form of Greek added a stroke (or many strokes, actually, of many styluses) 600 years to the known history of the Greek language – Europe’s oldest by far. Linear B was inscribed on accidentally baked (and so preserved) clay tablets used for the administration of palaces. And these palaces were the original inspiration for Europe’s two oldest literary works, Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. As a result, the decipherment played instantly into ‘the Homeric Question’.

For a historian such as myself, the question ‘Is Homer history?’ now resolved itself as ‘Does the epic-poetic picture of life in Odysseus’s Ithaca or Menelaus’s Sparta look anything much like life in an archaeologically recorded and Linear B-documented Mycenaean palace of the 13th century BC?’. I’ve had lots of fun trying to answer that one...

Paul Cartledge is a classicist whose most recent book is *Democracy: A Life* (OUP, 2016)



A Mycenaean tablet bearing Linear B script. The discovery of Linear B added 600 years to the known history of Greek

If you could witness a scene from history, what would it be?

JOANN FLETCHER

“The first jubilee of Amenhotep III (Tutankhamen’s grandfather). It was celebrated in 1360 BC, when Egypt was the greatest power in the world. Such jubilees had been held after 30 years of a pharaoh’s reign since around 3000 BC, with this one planned by consulting “the writings of old”. Yet it also served a greater purpose. Dressed in special robes and golden jewellery, Amenhotep departed from his palace at Malkata in Thebes, travelling in his ship of state to his nearby funerary temple, flanked by the Colossi of Memnon. And here, before the royal family, selected courtiers and all the gods whose cult statues had been brought from every temple in Egypt, Amenhotep underwent transformation into the living sun god.

Imagine the kind of spectacle capable of persuading several million subjects that their king had ‘become’ divine. For, as his courtiers declared: “Generations of people since the time of the ancestors had never celebrated

such jubilee rites,” which were portrayed in tomb and temple scenes.

Discussed in the diplomatic correspondence of Egypt’s allies, who hailed Amenhotep as “my lord, my god, my Sun!”, this spectacle was so memorable that it was remembered in classical accounts 1,000 years later. **H**

Professor Joann Fletcher’s most recent book is *The Story of Egypt* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2015), which accompanied her recent BBC Two series

Amenhotep III with the crocodile god Sobek. The pharaoh’s first jubilee celebrations were so spectacular that they were still being written about 1,000 years later, says Joann Fletcher

KATE WILLIAMS

“I’d go to New York on Tuesday 29 October 1929, the day of the Wall Street Crash, because my most recent book, *The Edge of the Fall*, is about a young woman and her family trying to find her way through the 1920s. I’d have already been in New York for a week or so, experiencing the last flush of the decade’s confidence – the belief that the economy was forever on the rise, that they’d just had the war to end all wars and that investment was safe. Speculation, lending, borrowing and land buying all contributed, but so did overproduction: farmers and manufacturers were generating more food and goods than could be consumed.

The flappers at dances and women sampling freedom, the sharp businessmen, the time of the jazz speakeasy and the dominance of the silver screen – the first Oscars ceremony was in May 1929 – was all to collapse into poverty and recrimination. I’d be there on Wall Street and listen to the indignation. And yet, considering how one of the early indicators was the crash in land prices in Florida in 1925–1926, it’s a salutary reminder of how we forgot – and created a bubble all over again before 2008.

Kate Williams (shown above) is professor of history at the University of Reading





Michael Wood on... **History in the 21st century**

“Britain still has something to offer the world in the crucial years ahead”

“It’s hard to believe that this is the 200th edition of *BBC History Magazine*. The first issue saw the light of day at the dawn of the new millennium in 2000. Since then it has opened the world of history to the general reader, and has grown in strength with the widest spectrum of articles and debate, not least by asking top specialists to make complex ideas clear, accessible and exciting.

And what great historical changes we have seen since the balmy days of 2000, the summer of the Sydney Olympics and *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*! At home, despite anti-capitalist demos in Whitehall (and even heckling by the WI!), there was still an optimistic glow around the Blair government. But clouds were gathering on the horizon. Climate was, of course, already the biggest, even if most people didn’t quite see that yet. But instability was growing across the world, especially in the near east, and this has gone on to alter our view of Britain, Europe and the world – and perforce our view of the meaning of history itself.

Radical Islam

The first of these developments is one of consuming interest to us all now: the rise of radical Islam. Driven by history, and with the 1979 Iranian Revolution as a marker, this was inspired by the idea that a radical form of Islam could triumph politically.

This vision of Islam, rooted in a particular interpretation of the history of seventh-century Arabia and the near east, produced in the 21st century a chain reaction that would lead like a burning fuse from the madrasas of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan to the mountains of Afghanistan and across to New York, London and Paris.

We all watched live, horror-struck, on that crystalline, eye-poppingly blue day in New York. As a symbolic moment, 9/11 has few peers. The Bush government, caught on the hop, seemed to have been unforgivably complacent given the intelligence they had. To my mind theirs was a failure of policy and intelligence, and also of imagination. But instead of pursuing a criminal gang and its supporters, they declared an international War on Terror with consequences that continue to shadow us all.

The 2003 invasion of Iraq, Blair and Bush argued, would bring peace and democracy (and even a settlement of the Palestinian question too – remember that?). In fact it led to massive loss of life and the near destruction of Iraq. It also dealt a huge blow to America’s wealth and reputation.

Bigger still, it triggered the destabilising of the Arab world, with grave implications for the geopolitics of the whole region: the Sykes-Picot line was blown away as if in a sandstorm. Now new-formed identities clamoured, leading us to the hope of the Arab Spring, and then the pessimism of Libya, Syria and Yemen: not to mention the genocide of some of the near east’s oldest religious communities.

Next is China. (Was the Chinese revolution the most important event of the 20th century?) After the brief communist era petered out in the 1970s, China turned to capitalism, out of which came the greatest lifting of people out of

poverty in human history. China is now a world power but it has been left with horrendous environmental issues, and threats to the food chain. It faces, too, urgent issues surrounding the rule of law, freedom of speech and representation. All this is of great concern among many Chinese people, who worry now that the massive dislocation of the communist era, followed by an equally huge swing to a materialist consumer society, has eroded their most cherished values. And now we have the China Dream; there is talk of a manned flight to the Moon, with a flight to Mars by 2020. We are watching a great shift in world history.

Great elephant

The Chinese government says that by 2049 it hopes to have created a “prosperous socialist and democratic country”, but that is no longer in its hands alone. For we all stand or fall now on a bigger issue still: climate – the great elephant in our room. In 2014, a new word entered the Oxford English Dictionary alongside ‘Cambrian’ and ‘Jurassic’: ‘Anthropocene’, an acknowledgement that we inhabit a new geological phase of Earth’s history, whose man-made effects

“We all stand or fall now on a bigger issue still, the climate – the great elephant in our room”





ILLUSTRATION BY
FEMKE DE JONG

may take millions of years to dissipate.

The signs were already there in the 1990s (in fact the stats had been clear since the 1960s). One year follows the next as the hottest on record while we continue to eat up the world's resources.

Zoologists tell us that we are in the Sixth Extinction. Now major works of history are being written about this and

campaigning for the break-up of James VI and I's Great Britain and the settlement of 1707.

The role of Britain in Europe too has been thrown into flux by this summer's referendum. So some of the most fundamental aspects of British history, which we have for so long taken as given, are now at issue. Among them is England itself, which badly needs to find a new narrative. I still find it extraordinary, however, that this small island off the shores of Europe, of which England is the core state, went out to the world with such astounding invention, creativity and adaptability between the 1600s and the 20th century.

It is tiny compared with the great civilisations of history like India, China, Iran and the Islamic world – it had a mere two and a half million people in 1550 – but the influence of its ideas, language, literature and politics has been massive. The English (and their co-workers in the imperial project, the Scots, Welsh and Irish) created things and ideas so useful to everyone else that they were adopted worldwide. We may have lost our empire, then, but (as the Shakespeare anniversary this spring showed) we still have an empire of the mind. And with all the challenges the world faces now, maybe our historical experience (as the first country to go through industrialisation) may still have something useful to offer the world in the crucial and potentially fateful period in human history that lies ahead. **H**

Michael Wood is professor of public history at the University of Manchester. His latest BBC TV series was *The Story of China*. He is preparing a film on humanity's oldest stories



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► Michael Wood writes about his **10 favourite history books** published since 2000 on our website: historyextra.com/bbchistorymagazine

Have your say Do you agree with Michael's views about the history of the last 16 years? Please write to us at letters@historyextra.com or continue the discussion on our Facebook and Twitter pages

a jaw-droppingly imaginative exhibition is being staged in Munich: Welcome to the Anthropocene. It is something we all need to engage with now in a serious attempt to understand how we got here, and what can be done. From now on, this is the meaning of history.

Here in Britain, the changes since we first went to print have also been dramatic. The collapse of Labour's traditional vote after three election victories looks now like the end of a phase of our industrial, political and social history, underlined by the crash of 2007–08 and the Scottish Nationalists

THE HOLOCAUST ON STAGE

Lisa Peschel has uncovered a series of plays performed by inmates of a Jewish ghetto near Nazi-occupied Prague. Here she reveals how these dramas helped the prisoners come to terms with the horror of their everyday lives

“You want to go home? Fools! The home you left is in the past, buried in the abyss of time! There’s a different world out there, beyond these walls!

Do you hear? A different world!”

In the stirring ending to the historical drama *The Smoke of Home*, set in the Thirty Years’ War, Casselius, one of the main protagonists, shatters the illusions of his fellow prisoners: there will be no return to the peace and plenty of their prewar lives.

These lines take on new meaning when we consider that they were written in a Second World War ghetto 40 miles north-west of Prague called Theresienstadt. Years before the end of the war, the play’s young Czech-Jewish authors explored a question that few of their own fellow prisoners could bear to face: if they survived, what kind of world would they return to?

The Smoke of Home was just one of many plays written in Theresienstadt, and theatre was just one of several art forms that thrived in the ghetto. Because the

Nazis did not expect any of the prisoners to survive they had little reason to censor the cultural life. Fortunately thousands did survive, and they preserved works even by artists who perished. Dozens of musical compositions and hundreds of children’s drawings, for example, have been exhibited and performed. Scholars believed, however, that most theatrical works created in the ghetto had been lost. In 2004–05,

however, during my interviews with survivors about their experience of the cultural life, several previously unknown scripts came to light.

The Smoke of Home was uncovered as a result of an interview I conducted with survivor Jiří Franěk. As we discussed the cultural life of the camp, he remembered a play written by two friends and described the plot in vivid detail.

One author, Jiří Stein, perished after being deported to Auschwitz, but the other, Zdeněk Eliáš, survived and eventually emigrated to the US. Jiří Franěk urged me to contact Zdeněk’s widow Kate, who kept it in a safe with his other important papers after he died – despite the fact that he had described the play to her as simply “a youthful endeavour”.

Additional scripts came to



The authors of *The Smoke of Home*: Jiří Stein (top), who died during the war, and Zdeněk Eliáš, who survived



Children perform an opera called *Brundibár* in the Theresienstadt ghetto. The Jewish inmates’ plays “provide a startling window into their experience of life, their hopes and fears,” says Lisa Peschel

PHOTOS COURTESY OF KATE AND DOROTHY ELIAS



Theresienstadt: the 'model' camp

In 1944, the Jewish ghetto was the scene of a Nazi propaganda stunt

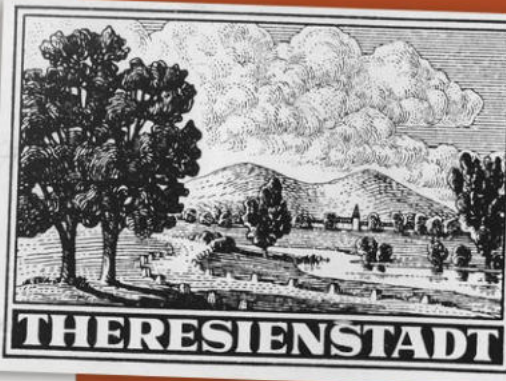
November 1941 saw the Nazis establishing a Jewish ghetto in Theresienstadt, a historic fortress town 40 miles north-west of Prague. Theresienstadt's main function was as a transit camp, where the Jews of central Europe could be gathered before they were sent "to the east". As the SS officers of the ghetto knew, but the prisoners did not, most of the outgoing transports went to Auschwitz.

Extreme overcrowding led to shortages of water and the spread of infectious diseases, while housing and the food supply were woefully inadequate. Although the mortality rate was high, there were no gas chambers; the prisoners were spared the horror of mechanised mass murder. The Nazis also left most of the administrative work to the Jewish leaders, which enabled them to establish features of 'normal life' in the ghetto.

In 1944 Theresienstadt played perhaps its most unusual role. After renovating a carefully prepared route through the ghetto, the Nazis allowed members of the Red Cross to visit in an attempt to convince them that reports of gas chambers were anti-German propaganda. The stunt worked; in his subsequent report the Swiss representative, Maurice Rossel, expressed surprise that the visit had taken so long to arrange when there seemed to be nothing to hide.

In the autumn of 1944, mass transports began that sent two-thirds of the ghetto's population to Auschwitz. Those who remained in the ghetto were liberated on 8 May 1945.

In all, 140,000 people were deported to Theresienstadt, where 34,000 of them died. Of the 87,000 deported to the east, only about 3,600 survived.



This postage stamp from 1943 masks the horrors of the Czech town's Jewish ghetto



Inmates watch Kurt Gerron's cabaret *Carousel* in Theresienstadt. Gerron, a celebrated Jewish film director, was incarcerated at Theresienstadt before dying at Auschwitz

light after I attended a lecture on Czech-language theatre by political prisoners in several camps. During the post-show Q&A, one audience member, Zdeněk Prokeš, expressed his surprise that theatre in the camps was so widespread, although he knew about Theresienstadt because his parents had a cabaret there. Prokeš gave me access to his father's entire collection of scripts.

Cabaret in the ghetto

But how were the prisoners able to preserve their creations? Almost all the labour in the ghetto, including administrative work, was carried out by the prisoners themselves. For example, Zdeněk's father Felix Porges (after the war he changed his name to the less Jewish-sounding Prokeš) supervised the delivery and distribution of provisions in the ghetto. He worked in an office supplied with typewriters, paper and even carbon paper, which he used to create multiple copies of cabaret scripts for his actors.

In a diary written in the ghetto, prisoner Philipp Manes described the work of the young author Georg Kafka, a distant relative of Franz Kafka, and how his employment provided him with access to writing materials: "During the day he worked in the files of the central archives of the ghetto [...] and at night, when his duties allowed (when outgoing transport lists were being prepared, sometimes the typists worked all night, for several nights in a row), he sat at the typewriter, transcribing his creations."

Porges remained in Theresienstadt until the ghetto was liberated, and thus was simply able to take his collection home. Kafka might also have remained in the ghetto, but when his own mother's name appeared on an outgoing

transport list, he voluntarily joined her. Both of them perished. He must have entrusted his play *The Death of Orpheus* to a friend before his deportation, however, for the manuscript was preserved in the archives of the Jewish Museum in Prague.

During my interviews with survivors they had described certain plays at great length, but when the scripts themselves started to come to light they were a revelation. They provide a startling window into the prisoners' real-time experience of life in the ghetto – not only as a record of the events of daily life, as reflected in the jokes in the cabarets, but as an expression of their hopes and fears in the ghetto and for life beyond Theresienstadt.

Some of the plays are deeply philosophical. *The Smoke of Home* engages with the question of the prisoners' postwar fate. *The Death of Orpheus*, based on the Greek myth, deals with similarly weighty themes. Set in the remote mountains where Orpheus has retreated in despair after losing Eurydice forever, Georg Kafka's script explores the nature of love and death and the role of the artist in a society facing its final days. Some of Orpheus's lines may be more chilling to us than to Kafka's Theresienstadt audiences, since we know that Kafka's position in the central archives may have made him privy to information about the true destination of the outgoing transports:

"Do you know what love is? It is this very silence.

Concealing from the ones we love the knowledge Of all the horror meant for us alone."

But perhaps the most striking feature of these scripts is that, aside from these few more serious works, almost all of them are comedies. In fact, comedy was so prevalent in the ghetto that I believe it provided the prisoners



ABOVE: A souvenir poster promoting a cabaret. RIGHT: A man wears the yellow star of David in the Theresienstadt ghetto in the early 1940s

with something they desperately needed. By rewriting their experiences in a comic vein, they converted their constant anxieties about life in the ghetto into a source of laughter rather than a source of frustration, or even terror.

One of the scripts preserved in the Prokeš collection is a 'mock' radio show that recreates the broadcast format of prewar radio station Prague 1. Porges and his fellow authors satirise life in the ghetto through news reports, commentary on a football match, and a children's story hour. Here's how a story, based on the tale of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*, converts the inadequate food supply of the ghetto into comedy:

"[T]iny little cakes and pastries were baked, tiny little dumplings and sometimes even tiny little pieces of meat. All the food was prepared in such a way so that it would not make anyone sick from overeating. You know, dear children, dwarfs have little tiny stomachs, so it was enough for them."

Two and a half years later, Porges and his fellow artists took on some of the prisoners' greatest fears in a new cabaret called *Laugh With Us*. For example, in a scene set on a park bench in the postwar future, Vítězslav Horpátky plays a pensioner, a survivor of Theresienstadt, who has never gotten around to taking the yellow star off his coat. Porges plays a young man who, curious about the star, has been asking him questions about the 'good old days' in the ghetto. As the scene begins, the pensioner is describing a long search for a prisoner named Josef Novák that ended in the news that he had left the ghetto:

"Horpátky: ...that Josef Novák, that name you must certainly still remember, left by transport.

One Theresienstadt 'radio show' satirised life in the ghetto through news reports, commentary on a football match and even a children's story hour

Porges: You mean maybe by train or by car.

Horpátky: No, transport.

Porges: What is that for a means of transportation?

Horpátky: Transport, that was a magic word. Children there weren't afraid of the bogey-man or witches, there they simply said, 'a transport is going', and you should have seen it, how that shook each of them, how all were immediately well-behaved and obedient; it's not surprising, since only selected people were allowed to leave on such a transport."

As survivor HG Adler wrote: "Fear of deportations made fear of death seem insignificant or even replaced it." In this remarkable exchange, however, first the authors minimise the threat of transports by portraying them as a way to frighten children. Then, in the final reversal, they made inclusion in the transports a reward rather than a catastrophe to be avoided at all costs. This sudden shift in perspective, even though

entirely fictional, may have helped the prisoners gain some relief from their anxiety about the transports through laughter.

Seven decades after they wrote their plays in the direst of circumstances, the Theresienstadt prisoners' remarkable works will soon return to stages around the world. As part of the project 'Performing the Jewish Archive', funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, the Theresienstadt plays are to be staged in Britain, America, the Czech Republic, South Africa and Australia in 2016 and 2017 (alongside newly discovered works by other Jewish artists in concentration camps, exile and in emigration).

The UK festival in June 2016 will take place in York and Leeds and will feature events ranging from *Harlequin in the Ghetto*, a play based on fragments of a preserved commedia dell'arte script, to Theresienstadt musical compositions played by the internationally renowned Nash Ensemble. What better opportunity to watch these remarkable works brought to life again? **H**

Lisa Peschel is a lecturer in theatre at the University of York, and editor of *Performing Captivity, Performing Escape: Cabarets and Plays from the Terezín/Theresienstadt Ghetto* (Seagull, 2014)

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BBC **HiSTORY**
MAGAZINE

THE TUDORS

behind closed

Happy family?

A 19th-century painting shows Henry VIII playing with his son, the future Edward VI. The young girl with Edward is probably Princess Mary and the girl to the left almost certainly her half-sister, Elizabeth. Henry would, no doubt, have approved of this benign portrayal of the royal nursery but life in the Tudor inner sanctum rarely matched the idealised image



doors

Was Henry VIII a hypochondriac?
Did Elizabeth I wish that she was
a man? And could Mary I have
been addicted to gambling?

Tracy Borman reveals the private
reality behind the well-crafted
public image of the Tudors' lives...



The fashion-conscious Henry VII kept cloth merchants like this very busy in the first two years of his reign

Henry VIII



THE MYTH

He was a model of physical vigour and kingly power

Henry VIII stood – literally – head and shoulders above the rest of his court. At 6ft 2ins tall, with a 42-inch chest and a 32-inch waist, he was an imposing, athletic figure. “Among a thousand noble companions, the king stands out the tallest, and his strength fits his majestic body,” enthused Thomas More. “There is fiery power in his eyes, beauty in his face, and the colour of twin roses in his cheeks.”

But behind this impressive façade lay a hypochondriac who was regularly thrown into a panic at any sign of illness at court. The French ambassador described him as “the most timid person in such matters you could meet”. The fact that Henry’s brother, Arthur, had died at the age of 15, before he had the chance to bear any heirs, may have sparked Henry’s paranoia. The new king willingly subjected himself to the examination of his physicians every morning, and also concocted remedies of his own from the cabinet of medicines that he kept hidden in his private apartments.

Although he was physically fit for the first two decades of his reign, Henry’s health began to seriously decline as a result of various injuries sustained from jousting. Tormented by the constant pain and frustrated by being unable to exercise as he once had, Henry rapidly gained weight, which made him even more incapacitated.

The private correspondence of Henry’s most personal body servant, Thomas Heneage, groom of the stool, reveals that he suffered from other, more embarrassing ailments. His love of red meat and lack of exercise led to severe constipation, which necessitated prolonged and often painful visits to his close stool. During one particularly bad bout in 1539, the king’s physicians prescribed an enema – a pig’s bladder with a greased metal tube fixed in it, which was inserted into the king’s anus. The bladder contained more than a pint of a weak solution of salt and infused herbs and it remained in place for two hours, after which Heneage reported

Henry VII



THE MYTH

He was a dour old miser

Henry VII has long had the reputation of a penny-pinching killjoy whose only pleasure in life was to scrutinise his accounts and swell the royal coffers. But there was a good deal more to the first Tudor king than that. True, he was careful with money to the point of parsimony, but he also knew how to spend it when the occasion demanded. One of his first acts upon becoming king after defeating Richard III at Bosworth in 1485 was to order a lavish new set of clothes. During the two years that followed, he spent a staggering £5,386 (equivalent to £3m today) on his wardrobe.

Although he liked to appear as a sober-minded and pious king, in private Henry was much more light-hearted. His household accounts reveal that he was fond of playing cards, even though he regularly suffered heavy losses – most notably in June 1492, when he was obliged to raid the royal coffers for £40 (£20,000 today) in order to pay off his creditor.

Physically fit from his years of campaigning, Henry held regular jousts and liked to play tennis, and later in his reign he employed two professional players to act as coaches. The king also employed a fool, a troop of minstrels, lute players, pipers, dancers and a group of singing children.

The new king had other pleasures too. There is evidence to suggest that he bedded his beautiful wife, Elizabeth

of York, before they were married. Their first child, Arthur, was born just eight months after the wedding.

Although it had begun as a political marriage, Henry grew to love his wife deeply and he was grief-stricken when she died in 1503, having given birth to no fewer than seven children. But Henry was not content to stay a widower for long. Among the nubile young brides that the middle-aged king considered marrying was Joanna, Queen of Naples, who was more than 20 years his junior.

This was more than just a diplomatic move: Henry instructed his ambassadors to describe in great detail every aspect of Joanna’s appearance – the colour of her hair, the condition of her teeth, the size and shape of her nose, the smoothness of her complexion, even whether she had hair on her upper lip. They should also, he demanded, pay particular attention to “her breasts... whether they be big or small”.

THE TRUTH

He was a pleasure-loving king with an eye for the ladies

that his royal master had been relieved by “a very fair siege”.

There are also hints in the contemporary sources that Henry started to lose his famed virility. As part of the evidence that was gathered for Anne Boleyn’s trial, the disgraced queen was alleged to have said that her husband lacked “puissance” in the marital bed. He was unable to consummate his marriage to his fourth wife, Anne of Cleves. Although he blamed it on her ugliness and made his private physician testify that he still had wet dreams, he seemed to protest a little too much.

THE TRUTH

He was a constipated hypochondriac who may well have suffered from impotency

A c1543 portrait of Henry VIII’s physician Sir William Butts, who treated the king for all kinds of embarrassing conditions



BRIDGEMAN



The c1570 painting *King Edward VI and the Pope: An Allegory of the Reformation* celebrates the king’s rejection of the pope (seen languishing at the bottom)

Edward VI



THE MYTH

He was a frail boy-king, dominated by his advisers

Edward has long been portrayed as the fragile boy-king, dominated by the overbearing presence of the dukes of Somerset and Northumberland. But he was made of sterner stuff than that. In fact, he was a chip off the old block.

Far from being a sickly child, Edward was a robust little boy and, as Henry VIII’s chief minister Thomas Cromwell put it, “sucketh like a child of his puissance”. Living in a succession of luxurious nurseries, as prince he was regularly spoilt with gifts and allowed to indulge in a diet of rich foods. One tactful visitor noted in October 1541 that the four-year-old Edward was “well fed”, adding that he was also “handsome” and “remarkably tall for his age”. It was only when Edward contracted measles as a teenager, that his constitution was dangerously weakened.

At times, Edward displayed flashes of his father’s notoriously savage temper. Reginald Pole, later archbishop of Canterbury, claimed that in a fit of rage, the young prince once tore a living falcon into four pieces in front of his tutors.

When he became king, Edward started to keep a diary – the only Tudor monarch to do so. A rather staid account of the key events of his reign, it also portrays the young king as cold, unfeeling and uncompromising – a dangerous blend of traits that might have hardened into tyranny if he had lived to maturity. Although he had been close to his uncle, Lord

Protector Somerset, Edward afforded his demise no more than the following cursory mention in his journal: “The Duke of Somerset had his head cut off upon Tower Hill between eight and nine o’clock in the morning.”

On the issue of religion, though, Edward had all the passion of a zealot. “In the court there is no bishop, and no man of learning so ready to argue in support of the new doctrine as the king,” wrote the imperial ambassador.

Edward spent several hours a day in private devotion and, determined that his subjects should conform to his faith, he spent much of his short reign implementing a series of radical reforms. These also affected those closest to the young king. An entry in Edward’s journal for January 1552 records: “The emperor’s ambassador moved me severally that my sister Mary might have mass, which, with no little reasoning with him, was denied him.” If he had lived to maturity, there is little doubt that Edward would have persecuted any non-conformists with increasing severity – even more so, perhaps, than his elder sister did.

THE TRUTH

He was a spoilt brat with the makings of a tyrant

Mary I



THE MYTH

She was defined by her intense piety and sober-mindedness

Mary has gone down in history as a severe, humourless monarch. Although she lacked the charisma of her father, Henry VIII, and half-sister, Elizabeth, England's first crown queen regnant was a different woman in the closeted world of her privy chamber.

One of Mary's favourite companions there was her female jester, Jane Cooper, known as 'Jane the Fool'. In common with other 'fools' of the period, Jane may have had learning disabilities. The queen was extremely fond of her and gave her many valuable clothes, as well as an unusual number of shoes. Jane was joined by another jester, 'Lucretia the Tumbler'. Although she and Jane sometimes performed together, Lucretia was a trained entertainer with impressive (and presumably acrobatic) skills.

Mary was also an avid gambler and loved to play cards and board games. Like her father, she was fond of masques and plays, and cherished an abiding love of music. She also loved to provide entertainments and feasts for her court. One Spanish visitor claimed that she spent more than 300,000 ducats a year on her table and that she and her court "drink more than would fill the Valladolid river".

Nowhere was Mary's passionate nature more obvious than in her relationship with her husband, Philip of Spain. She fell head over heels in love with him after seeing only his portrait, and lavished affection on him after they were married. According to his adviser, Philip himself was rather less enamoured, as his wife was "no good from the point of view of fleshly sensuality".

THE TRUTH

She was passionate and had a host of 'guilty pleasures' at court

Elizabeth I receives Dutch ambassadors in the 1570s. While her court was dominated by men, her 'secret lodgings' certainly weren't

Elizabeth I



THE MYTH

She was a man's woman

It's well known that Elizabeth I was comfortable in men's company. She loved to flirt with the many ambitious young men who frequented her court. Her liaison with Robert Dudley is well documented, as is her infatuation in old age with his stepson, the Earl of Essex, and her more sober relationships with trusted advisers such as Lord Burghley and Sir Francis Walsingham. The queen herself seemed to regret that she had been born a "weak and feeble woman", and was forever decrying the shortcomings of her sex.

But all of this was a deliberate ploy on Elizabeth's part. Far from believing her own publicity, she only pretended to regret that she had been born a woman in order to manipulate her male courtiers and establish her authority in what was essentially a man's world. In her own private world, it was the women who held sway.

When she retreated to the privacy of her 'secret lodgings' at court, Elizabeth was attended by a coterie of trusted ladies. They included her former nurse, Blanche Parry, who had served her since she was a baby and would notch up 57 years as a member of the queen's inner sanctum. Kat Astley, Elizabeth's old governess, was the most senior of her ladies and attended the queen in her most private hours – including her visits to the new flushing lavatories at court.

Lady Elizabeth Fiennes de Clinton was probably Elizabeth's closest friend. It was said that the queen trusted her "more than all others". Katherine Dudley, the youngest sister of Elizabeth's great favourite, was another constant companion and was often observed to be "very private" with her royal mistress.

These women would help the queen relax by playing cards with her, embroidering, practising dance steps and gossiping about the affairs of the



court. They would see her divested of her courtly splendour and knew the secrets of her carefully crafted image as the Virgin Queen. So familiar were they with their royal mistress's person that foreign ambassadors offered them bribes to confide whether she menstruated regularly and was therefore capable of bearing children.

While her male courtiers and councillors were obliged to wait around in the public rooms beyond, Elizabeth's ladies would spend hours alone with her, sharing her innermost thoughts and secrets. And in an age when access equalled power, this gave the women of Elizabeth's private world considerable influence in the public arena beyond. **H**

THE TRUTH

She preferred the company of her ladies

Tracy Borman is a historian and author. She will be discussing the private lives of the Tudors as part of *BBC History Magazine's* History Weekends in both Winchester and York in October – see historyweekend.com

DISCOVER MORE

BOOK

► **The Private Lives of the Tudors: Uncovering the Secrets of Britain's Greatest Dynasty** by Tracy Borman (Hodder & Stoughton, 2016)

TELEVISION

► **Private Lives of the Tudors**, presented by Tracy Borman, begins on 7 June on Yesterday



BBC **HiSTORY**
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BBC History Magazine's

History Weekends

Friday 7 October –
Sunday 9 October 2016
Winchester

**New
for
2016**

Friday 18 November –
Sunday 20 November 2016
York

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Join *BBC History Magazine* for two events – featuring talks from some of the world's leading historians and authors – at historic York and our new setting, the medieval city of Winchester

The festival

Juliet Barker is speaking at our York event this year, on the subject of Charlotte Brontë



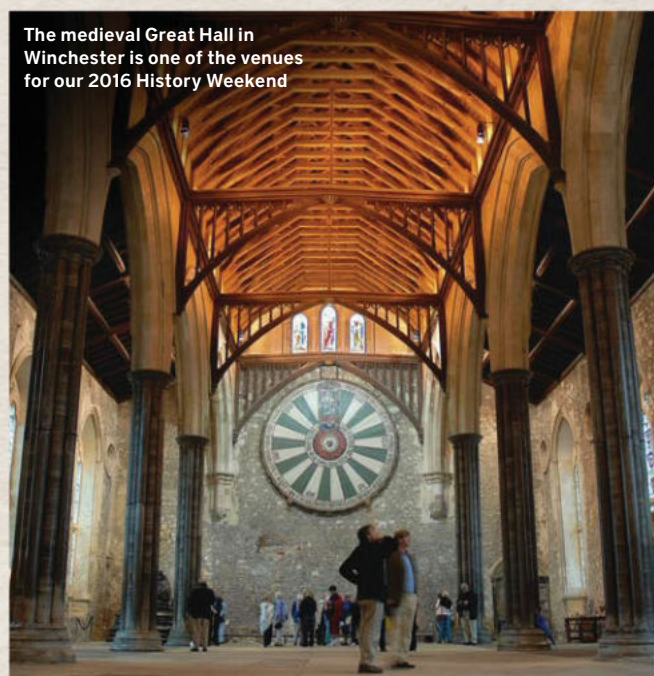
BBC History Magazine's weekend festival is back this autumn for a fourth year running. And this year's festival sees a new, historic, setting as well as a tremendous line-up featuring some of the biggest names in popular history.

From 7–9 October, the festival will be making its debut at the Hampshire town of Winchester. The ancient capital of Wessex is steeped in Anglo-Saxon and medieval history and we're delighted that one of our lecture venues will be the amazing 13th-century Great Hall, which contains a famous replica of King Arthur's round table. Speakers for our Winchester weekend will include Antony Beevor, Dan Snow, Suzannah Lipscomb, Jonathan Dimbleby and Tristram Hunt.

Then from 18–20 November we will return to York for the second year running. After the success of 2015 we've expanded our northern weekend to include over 20 speakers, among them Michael Wood, Tracy Borman, Simon Sebag Montefiore, David Olusoga and Janina Ramirez. Our venues this year are the Yorkshire Museum, one of the city's premier history attractions, and the 14th-century Hospitium building nearby.

For a full list of speakers at both events and details of how you can buy tickets, simply read on. We look forward to seeing you at one – or perhaps both – of the events.

The medieval Great Hall in Winchester is one of the venues for our 2016 History Weekend



Talks at our events frequently sell out so make sure to get your tickets early



Winchester

Date: 7–9 October

Where: The historic Great Hall and Ashburton Hall in the nearby Elizabeth II Court. They are located in the centre of Winchester, a short walk from the town's train station. Both venues accommodate people with disabilities. Please let us know of any access requirements when booking tickets.

What's on: Almost 30 speakers over three days, plus a fully stocked Waterstones bookshop, speaker book-signings, the H for History Quiz and Historical Trips Debate.

York

Date: 18–20 November

Where: The newly-refurbished Yorkshire Museum and the 14th-century Hospitium, which is close-by. Both venues are situated in central York, a 10–15 minute walk from the train station. Both venues accommodate people with disabilities. Please let us know of any access requirements when booking tickets.

What's on: More than 20 speakers, plus speaker book-signings and a mobile Waterstones bookshop.

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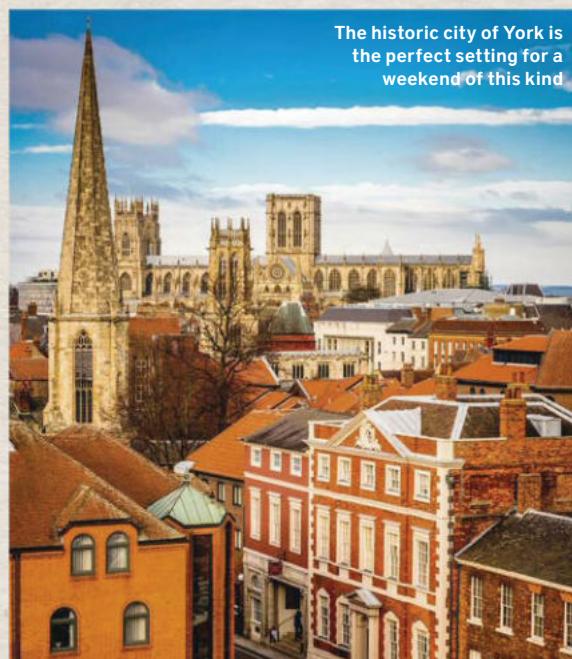


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THE SPEAKERS

● Winchester ● York

Juliet Barker



Juliet Barker is a bestselling author and historian who has written books on subjects such as the battle of Agincourt, the

Peasants' Revolt and the Brontë sisters.

Talk: Fact or Fiction? Mrs Gaskell and her 'Life of Charlotte Brontë'

● **Saturday 19 November** 15.30–16.30

Mrs Gaskell's 1857 *Life of Charlotte Brontë* is one of the most famous and powerful biographies ever written. But how much of it is true? What did Mrs Gaskell leave out – and why? On the 200th anniversary of the *Jane Eyre* author's birth, Juliet separates myth from reality to discover the real Charlotte Brontë.

Jerry Brotton



Jerry Brotton is professor of renaissance studies at Queen Mary, University of London and the author of several

books, including *This Orient Isle*.

Talk: This Orient Isle: Elizabethan England and the Islamic World

● **Saturday 8 October** 13.30–14.30

Following her excommunication in 1570, Elizabeth I established a remarkable series of commercial, diplomatic and military alliances with the Islamic world. Ranging from the Moroccan sugar that caused such havoc with Elizabeth's teeth to Shakespeare's *Othello*, Jerry's talk reveals that Tudor England's relations with the Muslim world were far more extensive than has often been appreciated.

Jonathan Dimbleby



Jonathan Dimbleby is a journalist, broadcaster and historian, whose many presenting credits include hosting *Any*

Questions on BBC Radio 4. His books include accounts of the battle of the Atlantic and the desert war.

Talk: The Battle of the Atlantic: How the Allies Won the War

● **Saturday 8 October** 18.00–19.00

Jonathan tells the gripping tale of the campaign that ultimately determined the outcome of the Second World War. This is the epic story of the decisions that led to Allied victory and the horror that humanity endured in those perilous seas.

AC Grayling



AC Grayling is the founder and Master of New College of the Humanities. He has written widely on philosophical subjects, including

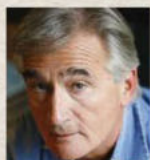
his 2016 book *The Age of Genius*.

Talk: Progress in Troubled Times: Learning from 'The Age of Genius'

● **Sunday 9 October** 14.00–15.00

AC Grayling examines how the 17th-century intellectual revolution moved the human mind from a medieval to a modern outlook, and this despite – or because of? – the tumult and anarchy of the century's many devastating wars.

Antony Beevor



Antony Beevor is one of the world's bestselling military historians. His books include *Stalingrad*, *Berlin*, *D-Day* and, most recently,

Ardennes 1944: Hitler's Last Gamble.

Talk: Ardennes 1944

● **Sunday 9 October** 14.00–15.00

On 16 December 1944, the Allies were taken completely by surprise when Hitler launched his last great offensive, in southern Belgium. Antony will describe the dramatic events that followed, as the German winter offensive proved terrible for soldiers and civilians alike. The cold and the savagery even prompted comparisons to the battle of Stalingrad.

Paul Cartledge



Professor Paul Cartledge is a classicist who is senior research fellow at Clare College, Cambridge. His most recent

book is *Democracy: A Life* (2016).

Talk: Democracy, Ancient Versus Modern: Ten Things You Really Ought to Know

● **Sunday 20 November** 14.00–15.00

We're all 'democrats' now – well, most of us. But none of us is an ancient Greek-style democrat. The Greeks – who invented the word as well as the thing 'democracy' – did their (direct) democracy very differently indeed. Paul will explore those differences in a thought-provoking talk.

Peter Frankopan



Peter Frankopan is senior research fellow at Worcester College, Oxford. He is also a successful author, whose latest book is the

acclaimed *The Silk Roads* (2015).

Talk: The Silk Roads: A New History of the World

● **Friday 7 October** 19.30–20.30

For centuries, fame and fortune was to be found in the west – in the New World of the Americas. Yet, as Peter will show, the region stretching from eastern Europe and sweeping right across central Asia deep into China and India, the true centre of the earth, is where civilisation itself began. As a new era emerges, the Silk Roads are rising again.

James Holland



James Holland is an author, historian and broadcaster. His books include *The War in the West* and, most recently, *Burma '44*.

Talk: Burma '44: The Battle that Turned the War in the Far East

● **Sunday 9 October** 12.00–13.00

In February 1944, a rag-tag collection of base troops, stiffened by a few dogged Yorkshiremen and a handful of tank crews, held out against some of the finest infantry in the Japanese army, and then defeated them at the Admin Box. In this talk, James tells the tale of one of the most astonishing battles of the Second World War – one that helped turn defeat into victory.

Tracy Borman



Tracy Borman is an acclaimed author and historian, whose books include a biography of Thomas

Cromwell, and *The Private Lives of the Tudors*.

Talk: The Private Lives of the Tudors

● **Saturday 8 October** 13.30–14.30

● **Saturday 19 November** 17.00–18.00

This talk will take the audience behind closed doors to explore the intimate history of the most celebrated royal dynasty in history. In the privacy of their apartments, the Tudor monarchs led very different lives to the ones that most of their subjects witnessed. Tracy will reveal the Tudors as they really were.

Barry Cunliffe



Barry Cunliffe is one of Britain's best-known archaeologists. He has written a number of books including *Britain Begins*, *The*

Celts and *By Steppe, Desert, and Ocean*.

Talk: By Steppe, Desert and Ocean: the Birth of Eurasia

● **Saturday 8 October** 15.00–16.00

Barry's talk will take a look at how the vast Eurasian landscape affected the mobility of people from the earliest Neolithic farmers to the Mongols, isolating some but encouraging others to be constantly on the move. Was their restless mobility in their DNA or was it the constraints of the land that forced them onwards?

George Goodwin



George Goodwin is a historian and author whose latest book, *Benjamin Franklin in London*, was a

2016 BBC Radio 4 Book of the Week.

Talk: Benjamin Franklin: British Royalist to American Revolutionary

● **Saturday 8 October** 10.00–11.00

● **Sunday 20 November** 14.00–15.00

Franklin came to Britain in 1757 as a world-renowned scientist with access to kings and prime ministers. He wanted a British empire of North America, but was ultimately forced to flee in March 1775. George tells a surprising and dramatic tale set in the bustle of 18th-century London.

Tom Holland



Tom Holland is an author and historian and the co-presenter of *Making History* on BBC Radio 4. His books include *Dynasty*, *In the*

Shadow of the Sword and a forthcoming biography of Æthelstan.

Talk: Æthelstan and the Making of England

● **Saturday 8 October** 18.00–19.00

● **Sunday 20 November** 17.00–18.00

Æthelstan, the grandson of Alfred the Great, can legitimately be titled the first king of England. Tom will tell the story of how, over the course of three generations, the royal dynasty of Wessex went from near oblivion to fashioning the most precocious nation state in Europe.

Tristram Hunt



Tristram Hunt is a historian, author and broadcaster as well as being the Labour MP for Stoke-on-Trent Central. His most recent book is *Ten Cities that Made an Empire* (2015).

Talk: *Ten Cities that Made an Empire*

● **Saturday 8 October** 11.30–12.30

The final embers of the British empire are dying, but its legacy remains in the lives and structures of the cities which it shaped. Tristram examines the stories and defining ideas of 10 of the most important: Boston, Bridgetown, Dublin, Cape Town, Calcutta, Hong Kong, Bombay, Melbourne, New Delhi, and 20th-century Liverpool.

Anna Keay



Anna Keay is a writer and historian who is also the director of the Landmark Trust. She is the author of *The Last Royal Rebel*.

Talk: *The Last Royal Rebel*

● **Sunday 9 October** 17.00–18.00
● **Sunday 20 November** 12.00–13.00

At dawn on 6 July 1685, the last battle ever fought on English soil was already coming to a close. It was the sorry end of the invasion attempt by Charles II's dashing illegitimate son, James, Duke of Monmouth. Anna's talk will reveal the true story of how a debauched bastard son grew into a man of principle, challenging his uncle for the throne, and becoming one of the founding fathers of modern politics.

Ryan Lavelle



Ryan Lavelle is a reader in early medieval history at the University of Winchester. He recently acted as historical advisor to the BBC drama *The Last Kingdom*.

Talk: *Cnut the Great and his English Kingdom*

● **Friday 7 October** 18.00–19.00

The seizure of Æthelred the Unready's kingdom by Cnut a millennium ago was the culmination of perhaps the most brutal Viking campaign of the early Middle Ages. Bringing in some exciting new work on this fascinating king, Ryan's talk explores the ways in which Cnut worked with existing systems in the English kingdom while maintaining his identity as a Danish conqueror.

Suzannah Lipscomb



Dr Suzannah Lipscomb is a historian, broadcaster, and Head of the History Faculty at New College of the Humanities. Her latest book is *The King is Dead*.

Talk: *Leadership Lessons from the Tudors*

● **Saturday 8 October** 16.30–17.30
● **Saturday 19 November** 11.30–12.30

The Tudor era saw the creation of the modern state, the beginnings of overseas empire, the English Renaissance, and two seriously impressive monarchs at the helm. In this light-hearted look at 20 leadership lessons from the Tudors, Suzannah crams in loads of fascinating historical gems gathered over years of studying this powerful dynasty.

Andrew Lownie



Andrew Lownie is a literary agent and a visiting fellow at Churchill College, Cambridge. His books include *Lives of John Buchan* and, most recently, *Guy Burgess*.

Talk: *Stalin's Englishman: The Lives of Guy Burgess*

● **Sunday 20 November** 15.30–16.30

Guy Burgess was the most important, complex and fascinating of 'The Cambridge Spies' – five brilliant young men recruited in the 1930s to betray their country to the Soviet Union. Based on interviews with more than 100 people who knew him personally and the discovery of hitherto secret files, Andrew's talk will offer a fresh perspective on Burgess and his world.

Philip Mansel



Philip Mansel is a historian and author who specialises in the Middle East and France. Among his books is *Aleppo: The Rise and Fall of Syria's Great Merchant City* (2016).

Talk: *Aleppo: from World City to Ghost City*

● **Saturday 19 November** 14.00–15.00

Since its conquest by the Ottoman empire in 1516, Aleppo had a relatively peaceful history. It was primarily a trading city, called the 'emporium of the Orient world'. It survived the fall of the Ottoman empire and French imperial rule relatively unscathed. Only since the outbreak of civil war in Syria have relations between communities broken down. In this talk, Philip charts the city's remarkable past.

Marc Morris



Marc Morris is a historian and broadcaster who specialises in the Middle Ages. His books include *The Norman Conquest*, *King John* and *A Great and Terrible King: Edward I and the Forging of Britain*.

Talk: *The Norman Conquest: Why Did it Matter?*

● **Saturday 8 October** 15.00–16.00
● **Sunday 20 November** 12.00–13.00

This year is the 950th anniversary of the most famous date in English history. Everyone remembers the story, depicted on the Bayeux Tapestry, of William the Conqueror's successful invasion, and poor King Harold being felled by an arrow in the eye. But why do we remember 1066 above all other dates, and why do the events of that year matter so much? In this talk Marc looks at the replacement of the ruling elite of Anglo-Saxon England, the revolution in architecture, and the introduction of new attitudes towards human life.

Talk: *A Great and Terrible King: Edward I and the Forging of Britain*

● **Sunday 9 October** 12.00–13.00

Edward I is commonly remembered as 'Longshanks', the villain in Mel Gibson's *Braveheart*. But his attempt to conquer Scotland forms only one chapter of this king's astonishingly action-packed life. Edward also defeated and killed the famous Simon de Montfort in battle; travelled to the Holy Land on crusade; conquered Wales, extinguishing forever its native rulers; and constructed the most magnificent chain of castles ever created. In this talk Marc offers an overview of the king's career and examines his legacy, the effects of which are still felt today.

Giles Milton



Giles Milton is a historian and bestselling author whose most recent book is *The Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare* (2016).

Talk: *The Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare: Churchill's Mavericks, Plotting Hitler's Defeat*

● **Saturday 8 October** 10.00–11.00

In 1939 a secret organisation was founded in London. Its purpose was to destroy Hitler's war machine through spectacular acts of sabotage. The guerrilla campaign that followed was every bit as extraordinary as the six gentlemen who directed it. Giles will narrate a gripping adventure that is, perhaps, the last great untold story of the war.

John Julius Norwich



John Julius Norwich is a historian and author whose books include histories of the popes, Venice, Byzantium and Sicily.

Talk: *Four Princes: Henry VIII, Francis I, Charles V, Suleiman the Magnificent and the Obsessions that Forged the Renaissance*

● **Sunday 20 November** 15.30–16.30

Never before had the world seen four such giants coexisting. Sometimes friends, more often enemies, these men held Europe in the hollow of their hands. Through the stories of its four great princes, John Julius offers a vivid history of the Renaissance and the making of early modern Europe.



You'll find a full list of ticket prices – plus a full rundown of the programme and speaker details – on historyweekend.com



David Olusoga on stage at last year's event in Malmesbury. He is returning for 2016 to speak at our York weekend

David Olusoga



David Olusoga is a historian, broadcaster and film-maker. His presenting credits include the BBC series *The World's War*, *Britain's Forgotten Slave Owners* and the forthcoming *A Black History of Britain*.

Talk: A Black History of Britain

● Friday 18 November 17.30–18.30

Black people have always been part of the British story. There were African soldiers on Hadrian's Wall and black sailors at Trafalgar. There were black people in the Tudor court and for centuries Africa and her peoples were a British obsession. In his talk David will argue that black history isn't a separate annex of British history but a fascinating, surprising and revealing aspect of our national story.

Janina Ramirez



Dr Janina Ramirez is a presenter and author based at Oxford University. Her latest book is *The Private Lives of the Saints* (2015).

Talk: Medieval Mysticism: Seeing the World in a Hazelnut

● Saturday 8 October 21.30–22.30

● Saturday 19 November 21.00–22.00

Christian medieval England can seem like a world trapped in tradition. But there was a group of writers in the 14th and 15th centuries who presented an alternative – the mystics. In particular, Julian of Norwich broke the mould. She presents God as a mother, a life without sin, and the universe in a hazelnut. Building on new discoveries, this talk will uncover a literary genius, who is as relevant as ever.

Julian D Richards



Julian D Richards is a professor of archaeology based at the University of York, specialising in the Vikings and Anglo-Saxons.

Talk: The Viking Great Army and the Making of England

● Friday 18 November 19.30–20.30

From 865–79 a Viking 'Great Army' wreaked havoc on the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, leading to political conquest, settlement and extensive cultural and linguistic influences. This critical period for English history led to changes in land ownership, society and the economy. Yet despite the pivotal role of the Great Army in these events, little has been known of it. That is now being changed by new discoveries, which provide the subject of this lecture.

Special events

Some more reasons to come along to our History Weekends...

The Historical Trips Debate

● Saturday 8 October 20.00–21.00

Four expert historians will debate whether there is too much focus on the Second World War in British history. The debate is sponsored by Historical Trips.



The H for History Quiz

● Saturday 8 October From 21.30

Test your historical knowledge – and win prizes too – by taking part in our quiz run in association with H for History. The quiz will be hosted by Julian Humphrys, regular contributor to *BBC History Magazine* and host of last year's quiz in Malmesbury.



More events to come

Some more special events are still due to be added to the schedule. Please keep an eye on historyweekend.com for information about those.

Joanne Paul



Joanne Paul is a historian based at New College of the Humanities. Her new biography of Tudor statesman Thomas More is due to be published later this year.

Talk: 10 Myths about Thomas More

● Saturday 8 October 11.30–12.30

● Sunday 20 November 10.30–11.30

Saint or torturer? Hero or villain? In her talk, Joanne will explore some of the common misconceptions about Thomas More – from the circumstances of his birth to his last words, from *A Man for all Seasons* to *Wolf Hall* – in an attempt to better understand this fascinating and controversial figure.

David Reynolds



David Reynolds is a historian, author and broadcaster based at the University of Cambridge. He specialises in 20th-century international history.

Talk: The Great War: What We Remember – and Forget

● Sunday 9 October 10.30–11.30

In Britain 2016 has been a big year for Great War commemoration, with the centenaries of Jutland and the Somme. In his talk, David will reflect on what we as a country remember about the Great War – and what we choose to forget. A century on, he will argue, we must not simply remember 1914–18 as tragedy and heroism but also try to understand it as history.

Fern Riddell



Fern Riddell is a cultural historian based at King's College London. She has made several TV and radio appearances and consults on BBC drama *Ripper Street*.

Talk: How To Please Your Wife: A Victorian Guide to Love, Sex, and Marriage

● Sunday 9 October 10.30–11.30

● Sunday 20 November 10.30–11.30

We often think of the Victorians as prudish, but as Fern explores, our 19th-century ancestors had a much more modern attitude towards sex and love than we might realise. From the sentimental to the scandalous, this talk will look at the practical (and impractical) advice the Victorians had for a life of marital bliss.

Michael Scott



Michael Scott is the author of several books on ancient Greek and Roman society and has presented numerous TV documentaries on ancient history.

Talk: Ancient Worlds: Linking East and West

● Friday 7 October 21.00–22.00

History – and particularly ancient history – is so often studied through an isolated focus on particular time periods or places. But so much of these cultures depended on the interaction they had with one another. In this talk, Michael offers an ancient global history, focusing around three key moments in which politics, warfare and religion helped forge a connected ancient world.



Simon Sebag Montefiore



Simon Sebag Montefiore is a historian, author and broadcaster who has written bestselling books on Stalin, Jerusalem and,

earlier this year, the Romanov tsars.

Talk: The Romanovs: 1613-1918 – Ivan the Terrible to Stalin and Peter the Great to Putin

● **Sunday 20 November** 17.00–18.00

The Romanovs were the most successful dynasty of modern times. How did one family forge the world's greatest empire? And how did they lose it all? Simon will tell the story of 20 tsars and tsarinas, revealing their secret world of unlimited power, overshadowed by palace conspiracy, family rivalries, sexual decadence and wild extravagance.

James Sharpe



James Sharpe is a historian based at the University of York. He is the author of numerous books on the history of crime and witchcraft in

early modern England.

Talk: Why did We Stop Punishing Criminals in Public?

● **Friday 18 November** 16.00–17.00

Public execution was at the centre of the penal system in the 18th century, but by 1868 opinion had rejected this spectacle of suffering, and from that date hangings were carried out inside prisons. In this talk, James will offer new light on this subject by placing the execution of criminals in the context of other forms of public punishment between the Tudor period and the 19th century.

Chris Skidmore



Chris Skidmore is a historian and author as well as being Conservative MP for Kingswood. His new biography of Richard III is due

to be published this autumn.

Talk: Richard III: Brother, Protector, King: Why did Richard Decide to Seize the Throne?

● **Saturday 8 October** 20.00–21.00

● **Saturday 19 November** 19.30–20.30

Richard went from loyal member of the Yorkist dynasty to overthrowing his nephew and seizing the throne in just three months. What was going on in Richard's mind? Had he always planned to take the crown, or had he been forced into a situation where there was no alternative?

Dan Snow



Dan Snow is a historian, author and broadcaster. He has presented numerous BBC documentaries including *The Vikings Uncovered*, *Armada: 12 Days to Save England* and *The Birth of Empire: The East India Company*.

Talk: The Battle of the Somme

● **Sunday 9 October** 17.00–18.00

In the summer of 1916, Britain and France launched a major attack on German forces at the Somme. The resulting five-month-long battle of attrition did not produce a decisive result and led to a total of more than 1 million casualties on both sides. In the year of the Somme centenary, Dan will reflect on a battle that occupies a unique place in Britain's national psyche.

Alex von Tunzelmann



Alex von Tunzelmann is a historian and writer, author of *Red Heat*, *Indian Summer* and the upcoming *Blood and Sand*.

Talk: Blood and Sand: Suez, Hungary, and 16 Days that Shook the World

● **Saturday 8 October** 16.30–17.30

● **Saturday 19 November** 10.00–11.00

In October and November 1956, the crises of the Suez War and the Hungarian Revolution pushed the world to the brink of a nuclear conflict. This talk will explore the personalities at the centre of these events, including Eden, Eisenhower, Khrushchev and Nasser, and show how the crises of 1956 set the scene for problems that face us today.

Alexander Watson



Alexander Watson is professor of history at Goldsmiths. His 2014 book *Ring of Steel* was awarded the Wolfson History Prize.

Talk: Ring of Steel: Germany and Austria-Hungary at War, 1914-1918

● **Sunday 9 October** 15.30–16.30

Alex will recount the events of the First World War from the perspectives of Germany and Austria-Hungary. He will explore why central Europeans followed their leaders to war, and explain how the cataclysm perverted their societies. He will uncover the suffering inflicted by total mobilisation, Russian invasions and a ruthless British naval 'starvation blockade'.

Michael Wood



Michael Wood has been bringing history alive for generations of readers and viewers. He is the author of several highly

praised books on English history and has recorded over 100 documentary films, among them *In the Footsteps of Alexander the Great*, *The Story of India* and, most recently, *The Story of China*.

Talk: Alfred of Wessex: The Greatest Briton?

● **Sunday 9 October** 15.30–16.30

In this illustrated talk, which will include a film clip shot in the Vatican library, Michael will explore Alfred the Great's military, administrative and cultural achievements. He will argue that Alfred was the greatest ruler in British history, and one of the most remarkable leaders of any time or place.

Talk: Searching for Shakespeare

● **Friday 18 November** 21.00–22.00

In a richly illustrated talk, Michael, who is the author of a bestselling biography of the playwright, will situate Shakespeare's life within Tudor history. He will offer fascinating new insights into both Shakespeare's family background and his life in London.



Michael Wood has been a fixture of our History Weekends. This year he'll be at York and Winchester

How to book your tickets

To buy tickets, and for ticket prices, call **0871 620 4021** or go to **historyweekend.co.uk**

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Full T&Cs are available via the website



David Reynolds, Suzannah Lipscomb, Tom Holland and Andrew Roberts at the British Academy in London. The authors met up to discuss the highs – and lows – of history writing during *BBC History Magazine's* lifetime

Photography by
Fran Monks

“History books will need to be objects of desire”

To mark our 200th issue, our reviews editor **Matt Elton** asked four leading authors how they think history publishing has changed in the 16 years since *BBC History Magazine* was launched, and whether there's a future for books on the past...

What trends have shaped history books over the past 16 years?

Andrew Roberts: There are some very positive things. There is much more women's history and black history, for instance, and a much more diverse set of books is being published overall. But, at the same time, it strikes me that there are fewer books on large, overarching themes. It seems that if people are writing about a specific subject they seem to be choosing slightly smaller subjects than in the 1980s

and 90s, when there were plenty of new books being written on an entire decade or an entire war. More and more it's about people writing about smaller and smaller themes.

David Reynolds: There are challenges to writing about bigger themes, and it's sometimes more attractive to write a micro-history. On the other hand, there are still big books coming out. I recently read Sven Beckert's *Empire of Cotton* (Allen Lane, 2014), which is a sweeping account of how cotton production and manufacture developed. It's global in scope and leaves you with huge questions – but that's often what an important book does. It encourages people to pull it apart, and that's perhaps the greatest testimony to a book that has a real influence.

Tom Holland: An area that I'm sure will be a topic of considerable study was flagged up by Geoffrey Parker's *Global Crisis: War, Climate and Catastrophe in the Seventeenth Century* (Yale University Press, 2013), which explores the idea that crises around the globe in that period were the result of climactic change. It seems to me to be an absolutely archetypally 21st-century book, and obviously climate is going to be a topic that is not going to go away.

Just earlier this year there was a paper published which argued that climactic crisis had hit in the sixth and early seventh centuries AD with a major impact on the fortunes of the Roman and Persian empires and ultimately the rise of Islam. I suspect this will be a field of increasing interest: not just climate change but the concept of globalisation. When you live in a globalised world, it becomes easier to write panoramic histories that establish links across it.

What challenges does history, and history writing, face in 2016?

Suzannah Lipscomb: We now have good academic historians writing books that are accessible to a wider audience, not just for themselves, which hasn't always been the case. That's good, and to be encouraged. My concern is that there is still quite a lot of dross being published as history – an increasing amount, I'd say. I'm glad that academics and great historians are tackling that by writing for a general audience, because there's no other way of checking the quality of a lot of this material.

AR: The other thing that's happened since 2000 is the great rise of self-published books,



ANDREW ROBERTS

A student of modern history at Gonville and Caius College, University of Cambridge, Roberts worked as an investment banker before embarking on a career as a historian, lecturer and journalist. His books include *The Storm of War* (2009) and *Napoleon the Great* (2014, both Allen Lane). He has also presented a number of high-profile television series on a range of historical subjects.

TOM HOLLAND

After graduating from Queens' College, Cambridge with a double first in English, Holland began his literary career writing historical fiction. His non-fiction books include *Herodotus: The Histories – A New Translation* (Penguin Classics, 2013) and *Dynasty: The Rise and Fall of the House of Caesar* (Little, Brown, 2015). He is a regular presenter of the BBC Radio 4 series *Making History*.

many of which should not be published because they are not good enough. So few of them are of any quality and yet they do, I'm sure, impinge on the sales of much better books that have been properly edited.

SL: It seems to me that all of us are committed to the idea of writing for a general audience, but also that those books should not show any decline in scholarship.

TH: I think that there's a case for saying that, if you're writing for a general audience, it's almost more incumbent on you to make sure you get your facts absolutely right and that you're abreast with the most recent scholarly thinking, because for many people it will be the only taste that they have of that period.

DR: Another serious problem is the fact that student book lists are now very present-centred. If something doesn't come up on an online list of titles to buy, people just aren't interested. There are some classics of earlier periods that are just being overlooked.

AR: An important aspect that we should discuss is television. The BBC is now putting

out much less history on TV than it was between 2000 and 2014. I'd like whoever has made that decision to think again, because people love history on TV. It's not as if there should be a decade in which you focus on a particular subject such as gardening or food, for instance, before letting history have its time again. It would be a worry if this trend does carry on, not just for our careers but also for people enjoying history and therefore buying history books as a result of watching television shows.

DR: The appetite for history, both in terms of books and television, reflects the growth of the university sector since the 1970s and the number of people who have come through with a history education. Most of them will not then do any more specialist history, but they have an appetite for it and some critical sense of how history is written. That encourages them to read history books, watch TV programmes and so on. There is a big market and, as Andrew says, there has been a precipitous decline in history programming in the past couple of years.

A problem in the writing of academic history, meanwhile, is the Research Excellence Framework. This is a method of assessing higher education research that means that things have to be done in six-year chunks – which militates against big projects that take 10 years and are really important. I think it's an unfortunate aspect of what is in origin a reasonable request – that there should be some accountability of public

"There is still quite a lot of dross published as history – and an increasing amount, I'd say"



SUZANNAH LIPSCOMB

Educated at Lincoln College and Balliol College, University of Oxford, Lipscomb is head of history at the New College of the Humanities. She is a prolific broadcaster, with recent TV documentaries including *Henry VIII and his Six Wives*. Her books include *A Visitor's Companion to Tudor England* (Ebury, 2012) and *The King is Dead: The Last Will and Testament of Henry VIII* (Head of Zeus, 2015).

DAVID REYNOLDS

Professor of international history at Christ's College, Cambridge, Reynolds won the Wolfson History Prize in 2004 for his book *In Command of History: Churchill Fighting and Writing the Second World War* (Allen Lane). His subsequent books include *The Long Shadow: The Great War and the Twentieth Century* (Simon and Schuster, 2013), a subject about which he also presented a BBC series.

money, which I have no problem with – but I do feel that it's gone too far in bureaucratic culture. It has an inimical effect on the production of history books, too, because most of us are lone scholars and big projects take time – sometimes longer than six years.

Looking back at the past 16 years, what books stand out for you as being particularly interesting or important?

SL: For my period, the Tudors, a really key book was GW Bernard's *The King's Reformation: Henry VIII and the Remaking of the English Church* (Yale, 2005). It suggested that historian GR Elton hadn't got it quite right by saying that the reformation was all Thomas Cromwell's doing, and actually that Henry VIII was behind it. The massive tome Bernard came up with has been important even as a jumping-off point for discussion. And, the year before that, Eric Ives – who often saw things from a different perspective from Bernard – wrote *The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2004), a biography that isn't going to be surpassed for some time, no matter how many people try.

Equally important in terms of scholarship on the reformation are Eamon Duffy's books, particularly *The Voices of Morebath: Reformation and Rebellion in an English Village* (Yale, 2003). This is a look at the reformation in the parishes through churchwardens' accounts, and the extent to which there was reluctance to remove the paraphernalia of late medieval Catholicism.

"If a book doesn't come up on an online list of titles to buy, people just aren't interested"

Outside of my direct area, I've been really struck by Ian Mortimer's *Time Traveller's Guides*, which have been extremely helpful for getting a popular audience into the past, and Faramerz Dabhoiwala's *The Origins of Sex: A History of the First Sexual Revolution* (Penguin, 2012), which is a very good read on the history of sexuality and morality.

DR: A book that had enormous impact is Neil MacGregor's *A History of the World in 100 Objects* (Allen Lane, 2010), which was commissioned by the BBC while MacGregor was in charge of the British Museum. You can measure a book's success by the number of imitators it has, and you can now go into any airport bookshop and see many examples of the idea that you can sum everything up in a few vignettes. In the hands of an author such as MacGregor I think it's an idea that can work very well, but in the hands of a second-rate imitator the result can be really crass.

Closer to my own area, Christopher Clark's superb *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe*

Went to War in 1914 (Allen Lane, 2012) had a great impact, but not always in ways that the author expected. I don't think Clark anticipated that the phrase 'sleepwalkers', which is never fully explained, would be an image that everyone latched on to as the way to understand 1914. It also illustrates a larger current of historiography about 1914: books about Germany's role, usually by non-Germans, that shift the blame towards the Balkans and Russia.

That's had a huge effect in Germany because, in a sense, it has exorcised the idea that the country was responsible for two world wars because of an essentially militaristic strain in its history. That book and several others have ignited debate in Germany, not least because the right and left wing of its historical profession are very politically polarised. Clark's is an example of a great book that's had a huge effect but in ways that the author didn't entirely calculate.

AR: On the subject of the end of the First World War, Margaret MacMillan's *Peacemakers: Six Months that Changed the World* (John Murray, 2001) is another key book. On a smaller scale, Anne Somerset's *The Affair of the Poisons: Murder, Infanticide and Satanism at the Court of Louis XIV* (St Martin's Press, 2004) is a perhaps overlooked book that is nonetheless important. What I think it did brilliantly was to take the period's gossip and rumour seriously: the ballads and jokes that some historians might have disregarded because they seem like throwaway lines, but do still mean something below the surface.

Lisa Jardine's book on 1688, *Going Dutch: How England Plundered Holland's Glory* (HarperCollins, 2008), is interesting in suggesting that it was a Dutch invasion rather than the British inviting them over. It was highly argumentative and ultimately I didn't agree with it, but boy, was it a great read for sheer sustained, intelligent, polemical discussion. Jardine's death last year was a tremendous and terrible loss to the trade.

TH: The book I read that most revolutionised my understanding of European history was *Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce AD 300-900* by Michael McCormick (Cambridge, 2002), who is a specialist in late antiquity. It's about how Europe in the Dark Ages – if we're allowed to call it that – emerged from the economic despond inflicted by the collapse

of the Roman empire in the west, thanks to the trading in slaves to the much richer Muslim powers of north Africa and Sicily. McCormick argues that this then provided the flow of gold that enabled Europe to take off in the early to high Middle Ages. I found it absolutely jaw-dropping.

On the topic of Islam, the great historiographical development over the past 30 years – which has really started quickening over the past decade – is the application of methodologies to the origins of Islam and the emergence of the caliphate that people would not think twice about applying to any other ancient civilisation. In that context, Stephen J Shoemaker's *The Death of a Prophet: The End of Muhammad's Life and the Beginnings of Islam* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011) seems to me to stand out. Shoemaker's background is in the critical study of the Bible, and he applies those methodologies to the early stories about Muhammad. For all kinds of obvious reasons, this is simultaneously the most sensitive and the most thrilling area of historical research right now.

If we were to meet up in another 16 years' time, how different would the world of history publishing be?

TH: I'll answer that question by looking backwards. Up until 1989, there was a sense that the history that mattered began with the French Revolution, and that what mattered was the Russian Revolution, the experience of fascism and the division of the world into rival power blocs, and that the Cold War had served in a sense to put earlier periods of history and their ability to affect the present into a deep freeze.

What happened with the end of the Cold War was that all kinds of ancient identities and hatred began to emerge out of the permafrost. And what you see now, 27 years on, is history emerging from all kinds of different places. Who would have thought, back in 1989, that possibly the most significant period for understanding current geopolitics would be the seventh and eighth centuries in the Middle East?

Looking at Britain, Linda Colley's *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707 – 1837* (Yale, 1992) served to flag up the firestorm of debate about British identity that has indeed engulfed us. I'm guessing, over the next 15 years, crises will blow up – both in



David Reynolds in discussion at the British Academy with our reviews editor, Matt Elton. "You can measure a book's success by the number of imitators it has," he says

"Books are going to have to become more beautiful in order to confront the digital threat"

Britain and the broader world – with roots in periods of history we can't yet predict. We will find that all kinds of books are, in the US historian Barbara Tuchman's phrase, "distant mirrors" of the present.

AR: I gave a speech at a school earlier today, and one of the questions I was asked was: if the campaign to remove the statue of Cecil Rhodes at a University of Oxford college goes on to its logical conclusion, will we be pulling down statues of Winston Churchill the racist? And I thought, yes, possibly. If, in 100 years' time, racism becomes the key distinguishing factor for good versus evil in society, then maybe even though Churchill was instrumental in destroying a far worse – and exterminationist – racism, nonetheless his racism may make it impossible to present him as a positive figure. So it strikes me that, because we can't predict what the future is going to hold, we should continue to write the best history that we possibly can and to let the future take care of itself.

SL: I would like to see more integration. I would hope, for instance, that there won't be such a thing as 'women's history', but that the perspectives of women, people from ethnic minority groups, and so on, will be more integrated into the mainstream. The other thing is that books are going to become more beautiful in order to confront the digital threat. They will need

to be desirable objects as much as anything.

DR: So you are confident about the continued existence of the 'book', then?

SL: Yes, very much so – but only as objects of desire in their own right.

AR: Do you think that we'll get to the point where history books will have links to extra material you can click and interact with?

TH: Publishers are having all kinds of discussions, but not for a fair while yet.

SL: Dan Snow makes a strong case for how digital apps can be used in an exciting way by layering video footage, maps, tables and so on. I don't think that kind of thing will supplant books, but I think that it will increasingly happen alongside them.

What advice would you give people who want to start writing history?

AR: Don't go into history writing for money! Do it for love and no other reason.

TH: Write about what you're interested in. Don't second-guess the market.

SL: The best writing comes from reading lots, so just read lots, both inside and outside the period that you're interested in. Get as broad a vision as possible.

DR: I'm lucky: I'm doing something that's about the only job in the world that I could do, and I love doing it. I've also gained a lot from the chance to do television and radio, because it really forces you to be clear on what you're trying to say, and say it in a succinct, non-condescending, jargon-free manner. There's a huge appetite for history – and people want to hear about it if you communicate it in the right kind of way. **H**

Hear more from this debate on our podcast: historyextra.com/bbchistorymagazine/podcasts. Tom, Suzannah and David will also be speaking at *BBC History Magazine's* History Weekends this autumn. See p67 for more details

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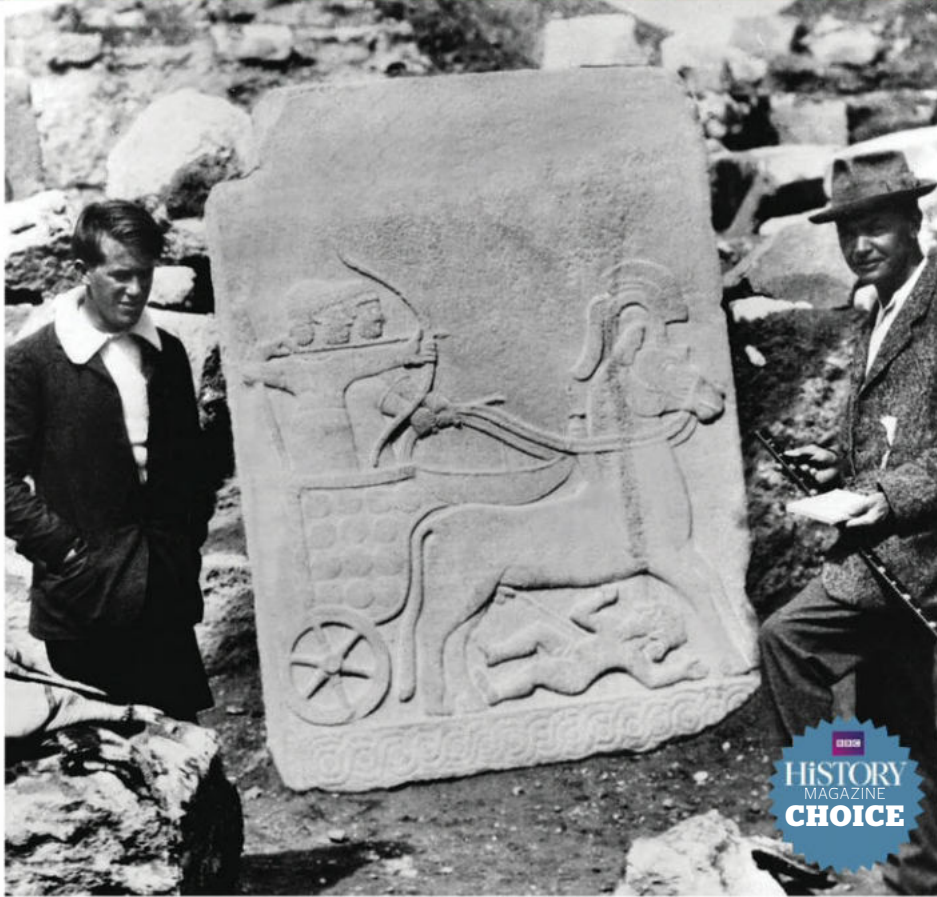
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FOR DISCERNING TRAVELLERS



TE Lawrence (left) pictured in Syria with archaeologist Charles Leonard Woolley, c1911. Neil Faulkner's new biography "skewers his main subject exactly", says James Barr

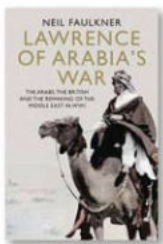
Shaping the Middle East

JAMES BARR enjoys a perceptive and provocative study of TE Lawrence's role in Middle East conflicts from 1916 to 1918

Lawrence of Arabia's War

by Neil Faulkner

Yale, 552 pages, £25



In September 1917, after ambushing a Turkish train near what is now the Jordan-Saudi border, TE Lawrence wrote two very different letters about what had happened. One, to a fellow officer, described the "last stunt" as "the hold-up of a train", before setting out precisely how he and his accomplices had killed 70 of the enemy

in 10 bloodthirsty minutes. But the other, written a day earlier, was franker. To a university friend, he admitted that "this killing of Turks is horrible". Indeed, he went on to confide: "I'm not going to last out this game much longer." In this new book – published on the centenary of the outbreak of the Arab Revolt that catapulted Lawrence to fame – Neil Faulkner writes that: "Lawrence's tragedy... was to be vulnerable, conscience-ridden and too clear-sighted."

Faulkner, a leftwing historian who has spent 10 seasons in southern Jordan excavating the vestiges of the Arab Revolt, knows the territory where

that ambush took place as well as Lawrence. I assumed this book would present the findings from the digs, but Lawrence enthusiasts will have to wait: that book, by Faulkner's colleague Nick Saunders, will be published next year.

Instead, what Faulkner offers is "an archaeologically and anthropologically informed politico-military history" that starts with the story of Lawrence's prewar expedition to map the routes through the Sinai. This was a mission that, as Lawrence realised, had rather greater military than archaeological import, but which made him realise, as he put it, how easy it can be to defy a government in a deserted country.

Leaving that thought floating, Faulkner then turns his attention to the context, setting out the strategic importance of the Suez Canal, the value of India, and the vulnerability of Egypt with a vivid clarity that makes it easy to understand why the Sultan's call to Muslims around the world to rise up against the British in a jihad caused such alarm in Cairo. It also led the British to court Hussein bin Ali, sharif of Mecca and descendant of the prophet, and to promise him a large empire if he rose up against the Ottomans.

Hussein's revolt went off half-cocked. Lawrence seized the chance to escape his desk job by offering a politically astute way to save the revolt at little cost to Britain. And so the Hejaz railway, which linked the Turks holding out in the holy city of Medina with Damascus, became a testing ground for a guerrilla war for which Britain provided money, weapons and advisers.

For Britain, the revolt was hugely militarily successful in diverting Turkish efforts away from where they could have made a difference. "Our most basic discovery," Faulkner writes when he does talk briefly about the archaeology in his introduction,

Neil Faulkner's book is caustic, richly detailed and provocative



COMING SOON...

"Next issue, I'll be meeting up with Daniel Todman to discuss **Britain's War: Into Battle, 1937-1941**, the first volume in his sweeping new two-part history of the Second World War. Plus, our expert reviewers will be on hand to offer their insights on the pick of the latest history books." *Matt Elton, reviews editor*

"was that the Turks had a military post watching every yard of the railway." Having done some sums, he reaches a stunning conclusion: "There were more Turks fighting 25,000 Arabs (at the most) than there were fighting 340,000 British."

Politically, however, the revolt was disastrous, both for the British and the Arab nationalists who supported it. Hussein had promised that his coup in Mecca would be accompanied by a much larger uprising in Syria. This didn't happen, and it meant that Hussein's uprising was entirely dependent on the British – who meanwhile had secretly agreed to divvy up the region with the French after the war in a manner that rode roughshod over their earlier

The revolt was politically disastrous, both for the British and Arab nationalist supporters

promise to Hussein. Faulkner blames Britain's freedom to do so on the Ottomans' pre-emptive execution of leading Arab nationalists, arguing that it is "safe to say that the modern Middle East has its current form largely as a consequence of the success of Ottoman crackdowns in August 1915 and May 1916 in aborting revolution in Syria". It is an interesting thought – one of many in this caustic, richly detailed and provocative book, in which the author's own politics are clearly visible.

My one gripe is with the psychobabble that occasionally intrudes, such as when Faulkner tells us that British troops in the Sinai enjoyed swimming for the "subliminal experience of its womb-like embrace" when its chief value was to get the grime off. But he skewers his main subject exactly, as when he observes that "as so often with Lawrence, flippancy packaged insight". One could say the same of Faulkner. **H**

James Barr is author of *A Line in the Sand: Britain, France and the Struggle that Shaped the Middle East* (Simon & Schuster, 2011)

Fighting fascism

SEBASTIAAN FABER recommends a fresh take on the Spanish Civil War that mixes personal accounts with the big picture

Spain in Our Hearts: Americans in the Spanish Civil War, 1936-39

by Adam Hochschild

Pan Macmillan, 464 pages, £25



"I have always harbored admiration for their courage and sacrifice in Spain," an op-ed in the *New York Times* read on 24 March this year. It was weeks after the death of Delmer Berg, the last surviving

member of the Abraham Lincoln Battalion who, aged 21, had volunteered to help defend the Spanish Republic when it was attacked by its own military with the support of Hitler and Mussolini. The piece was signed by Vietnam veteran and former US presidential candidate John McCain – an unlikely author.

The Cold War has long shaped the story of the conflict that ravaged Spain for three years following the failed coup of July 1936. It was the Cold War that, in the 1950s, lifted George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* out of relative obscurity to make it what was then the most-read non-fiction text on the war. And it was in that context that Americans like Berg could be prosecuted as "premature anti-fascists" engaged in "un-American activities".

Was it admiration for a fellow soldier that

prompted McCain's eulogy to Berg, an "unreconstructed communist", or did it signal an end to the Cold War paradigm?

As it happened, McCain's op-ed coincides with the release of Adam Hochschild's gripping new account of the 2,800 or so Americans who put their lives on the line to fight fascism years before the US declared war on the Axis. Hochschild has felt drawn to the Spanish story since the early 1960s, when he met some of the Lincoln veterans. He did well to wait 50 years in telling it. If the Cold War forced narrative contrasts into a stark black and white, Hochschild breathes new life into the picture with a broad palette of sympathetic shades.

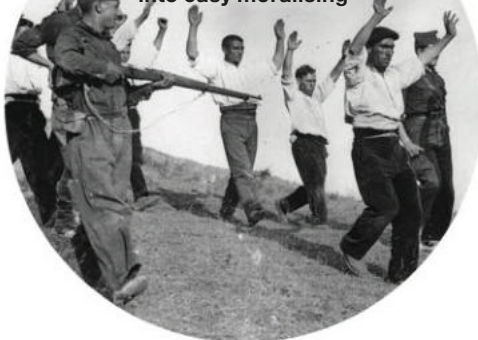
While Hochschild focuses on volunteers such as Berg, he doesn't ignore the war's local dynamic and global dimensions. What makes the book so effective, however, is his decision to explore these complexities through a set of interwoven biographies. We meet people such as Robert Merriman, the economist who inspired Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*; Joe Selligman, the first US volunteer to join the battle for Madrid; and Peter Kemp, a Cambridge graduate who volunteered for Franco's forces.

Hochschild tells nuanced tales of political awakenings and disillusionments, but also steadfast ethical commitment. He never descends into easy moralising. He is perhaps most unforgiving with the reporters covering the war: they missed major stories, including how Texaco helped Franco win by supplying limitless fuel – on credit.

Spanish Civil War history is a minefield but Hochschild has entered it sure-footedly, with great respect for those whose lives were marked indelibly. Around 750 American volunteers died – "a far higher death rate", Hochschild writes, "than the US military suffered in any of its 20th-century wars". **H**

Sebastian Faber is professor of Hispanic studies at Oberlin College

Spanish nationalist forces seize republican troops, c1936. A new book "never descends into easy moralising"





Alessandro de' Medici as depicted in a 16th-century portrait. Catherine Fletcher's study of his life reveals him as "ingenious, witty and athletic, but also violent and possibly tyrannical"

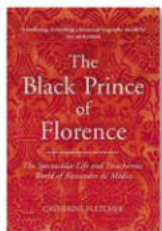
The black prince?

SUZANNAH LIPSCOMB praises a biography of Alessandro de' Medici, a 16th-century Duke of Florence whose story continues to fascinate

The Black Prince of Florence

by Catherine Fletcher

The Bodley Head, 336 pages, £20



The title of this book may sound familiar. *The Black Prince* was a novel by Iris Murdoch, and is the name often given to Hamlet on account of his black mourning garments and the darkness of his world. Catherine Fletcher's *Black Prince* inhabits a world of darkness, treachery and violence, but the title refers, in part, to the possibility that this 16th-century Duke of Florence was at least one-quarter black African.

It is a terrific piece of history. Fletcher can really write and is a ruddy good historian. There is much in the story of

Alessandro de' Medici that involves the judicious and sensitive reading of the sources and the piecing together of uncertain facts. Fletcher does this deftly, never misrepresenting or outrunning her evidence, and never allowing assumptions to creep in. In short, she maintains a standard that all history books should aim for, but too few reach.

Fletcher tells the story of this illegitimate son of the powerful Medici family, who was brought to power after his father Lorenzo died without legitimate heirs and his uncle Giulio was made Pope Clement VII. Alessandro was the

Fletcher maintains a standard all history books should aim for

second illegitimate heir after his older cousin, Ippolito, a thoroughly unpleasant man who kept a menagerie of 'exotic' people. When Clement was ill, Ippolito was made a cardinal so that he would be head of the family if Clement died. But Clement recovered and, much to Ippolito's resentment, it was Alessandro who got the plum job of being in charge of the city-state of Florence. Five years later, he was assassinated.

Alessandro was ingenious, witty and athletic, but also violent and possibly tyrannical: he once slashed his steward's chest for lying to him. As Duke of Florence, he rebuilt the shattered city, but also reportedly had political prisoners executed. Yet political execution was also true of the old Florentine republic, and these stories could well originate from later attempts to blacken Alessandro's name to justify his assassination.

Fletcher suggests that Alessandro was perhaps not such a womaniser as he has been portrayed: aside from his wife, he was mostly occupied by a long-term relationship with Taddea Malaspina. Whether he was part-African is hard to tell. He was referred to as 'mulatto', but this may reference his illegitimacy ('mule' meant 'bastard') and not have a racial tone, as Fletcher is careful to point out. Ippolito was regularly praised for his good looks; next to nothing is said about Alessandro's appearance – but this could be because dark skin was unfashionable.

In her careful analysis, Fletcher almost does herself out of a subject. Alessandro was Duke of Florence for a mere five years, and if he wasn't that tyrannical, or womanising, and maybe not even black, his importance dims. The dramatic irony that her book possesses – we know from the beautifully written prologue that he will be assassinated – produces a feeling not quite of mounting tension but more resigned anticipation.

But perhaps this is how Alessandro lived his life. This is an exciting, carefully written tale of a man who knew death awaited him, but could not escape it. **H**

Suzannah Lipscomb is author of *The King is Dead* (Head of Zeus, 2015), and among the writers sharing her thoughts on the future of history books in our interview on page 73

A fresco showing Jesus on the cross with the Virgin Mary to one side and Mary Magdalene at its foot. Michael Haag's book attempts to untangle the confusion between the various biblical Marys



Hail Mary

DIARMAID MACCULLOCH explores an attempt to track down the real Mary Magdalene – and to separate truth from fiction

The Quest for Mary Magdalene: History and Legend

by Michael Haag

Profile, 352 pages, £15.99



A number of popular studies spotlight individuals in the New Testament's supporting cast. The problem is always the biblical record itself: scanty, idiosyncratic and contradictory.

Mary Magdalene, one of Jesus's followers who in the Middle Ages gained a reputation as a prostitute, scores better than some in direct references. Indeed, her 14 mentions compare favourably with the Virgin Mary's measly eight. This becomes a springboard for a major theme of Michael Haag's book: the polarity in Christian thought between Magdalene, the Whore, and Mary, the Virgin.

It's hardly a new idea and, as he points out, one that has led to some spectacular

silliness – not least in Dan Brown's infuriatingly successful novel *The Da Vinci Code*. The notion of Mary Magdalene as whore arose from creative confusion between genuine Magdalene biblical references and the unknown woman who washed Jesus's feet with expensive ointment, her hair and her tears – as well as the much later hermit Mary of Egypt, who allegedly retired from the 'oldest profession' to a life of penitence in the fifth century.

Undoubtedly, the Magdalene was a force to be reckoned with. Her name is probably not from a place, but a nickname, 'tower', which Jesus himself may have bestowed on her. Even though the church settled on a succession of men as

Tidy-minded male theologians were tempted to lump some of the Marys together

authority figures, her intense encounter with the resurrected Christ was not removed from the biblical record. The trouble was that there were so many Marys about in early church history that tidy-minded male theologians were tempted to lump some together. The western church led the way, and even the Reformation didn't end the confusion.

While sensibly deconstructing much of it, Haag is not immune to the temptation himself, toying with the idea that the Wedding at Cana – famous for Jesus' transformation of water into wine – was actually Jesus's marriage to Mary Magdalene, before moving briskly on. We meet the religious movements the gnostics and the cathars, who both liked the Magdalene, and Pope Gregory the

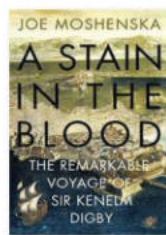
For queen and country

ANDREW HADFIELD rates a profile of 17th-century explorer Sir Kenelm Digby that ably captures his vivid experiences

A Stain in the Blood: The Remarkable Voyage of Sir Kenelm Digby

by Joe Moshenska

Heinemann, 576 pages, £20



As with many of his privileged contemporaries, Kenelm Digby lived a life of excitement, compromise and danger, burdened by a horrifying past. The skeleton in the closet was his father's execution for his part in the gunpowder plot. The son's

legacy was divided: on the one hand he remained a faithful Catholic and made little effort to disguise his faith; on the other he was a patriot, who looked back to Elizabethan heroes who served their queen by conquering new lands for her.

In 1627, aged just 24, the scholarly Digby commissioned a small fleet of boats, and set out on a quest to win glory for king and country and cleanse the "stain in the blood" felt by sons of traitors. Perhaps this sense of adventure impressed James VI and I, whose blood was also tainted: his mother, Mary Queen of Scots, had been executed for treason.

Digby sailed down to the Mediterranean experiencing a series of adventures, following the great heroic sailors of the ancient world: Odysseus, Aeneas, Noah, St Paul. Although, as Joe Moshenska points out, Kenelm was a fair-minded commander by the standards of the era, he was not averse to a spot of piracy. He enjoyed the republic of the sea where specific identities could be discarded, its camaraderie in stark contrast to his experiences at home. In Algiers, however, he was horrified at seeing slaves of every culture crammed together in confined dwellings. Kenelm negotiated the release of 50 Englishmen captured by pirates, the largest successful rescue of the time.

Kenelm was a man of great curiosity and appetite, collecting books on science and the occult as he landed in a variety of exotic places. He was a great gourmet,

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Great, who perpetrated her relaunch as a prostitute. And, of course, we meet Donatello's unforgettable image of her in Florence, an emaciated penitent still with traces of former beauty. The book's illustrations (including one of that 15th-century Donatello sculpture) are good; Haag has a penchant for agreeable vintage photos and enjoyably grim 19th-century French engravings. His conclusion is that the Magdalene may appeal more in future than Mary, the mother of God. This is a worthwhile book if read with care. **H**

Diarmaid MacCulloch is professor of the history of the church at the University of Oxford and was presenter of the BBC series *A History of Christianity*

and Moshenska writes especially well on his enthusiasm for foreign food. Back home in the family seat at Gayhurst House, Kenelm combined his laboratory and kitchen, experimenting with food as he did with the elements. As he travelled abroad, his wife, the pious Venetia, grew ever more withdrawn, and her premature death in 1633 overshadowed the last years of Kenelm's life.

Moshenska is a gifted intellectual and storyteller and this is a powerful book. At times he adds local colour by pretending we can know how his protagonist felt when evidence does not exist, an issue that compromises much popular history. The truth is vivid enough, and Moshenska a good enough writer not to have to make history sound like a novel. **H**

Andrew Hadfield, University of Sussex

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Exhibit A for the defence

PETER JONES on a look at the role of museums throughout history and the controversy that their acquisitions can cause

Keeping Their Marbles

by Tiffany Jenkins

Oxford, 368 pages, £25



A 'museum' is a place in which the muses, goddesses of culture, reside. In the ancient world, temples were one such location. The sixth-century BC Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon, a keen historian, installed in the area of his palace a publicly accessible "wonder cabinet of mankind", containing inscriptions, reliefs, weapons and other artefacts dating back as far as 2400 BC. Greek sanctuaries followed suit. But such displays were ad-hoc ragbags. The first proper museum came into being on 15 December 1471, when Pope Sixtus IV set aside display rooms on the Capitoline and appointed a board to manage them.

Tiffany Jenkins takes up her story from this time, which witnessed serious antiquarian interests from such major players as the Medici family. In the 18th century, explorer James Cook brought fascinating specimens back to the UK from Australia, while in 1759 the original British Museum was built to house the magnificent collection of doctor and scientist Hans Sloane. Other public museums sprang up, and over time a shift ensued from natural history to art, artefacts, displays of improving 'beauty' and general public education.

Museum 'antiquities fever' took hold with the growth of the field of archaeology, Napoleon's removal of material from Egypt through military conquest (a practice accepted from time immemorial) and the purchase by Thomas Bruce, Earl of Elgin, of the Parthenon sculptures and other architectural works (known as 'marbles') from Athens. At the heart of it all was an Enlightenment desire to master and rationalise a wildly diverse world.

But trouble was brewing. The Romantics felt that each culture was

unique, and that a diverse world should not be forced into neat, homogenised groups. The ideological struggle had begun; debate raged about what a museum was for.

The latest fashion to grip intellectuals and even museum curators is to damn museums as nothing but 'plunder' that should be sent back to its place of origin. Jenkins will have none of this virtue-signalling, arguing that political grievances will not be redressed by moving objects from A to B, and that the job of the museum is to "acquire, conserve, research and display their collections" for the benefit of everyone. It might also be argued that displaying magnificent products of other cultures is a way of helping people understand and appreciate those cultures.

Jenkins devotes rather too much space to attacking, somewhat repetitively, trendy modern theories about museums' purpose, and the Elgin marbles debate is now very old hat to which Jenkins adds little. Yet she has much of interest to say about the development of museums and their changing ideologies. **H**

Peter Jones is author of *Eureka!: Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About the Ancient Greeks but Were Afraid to Ask* (Atlantic, 2014)



The Horse of Selene, one of the Parthenon sculptures. Are such holdings merely cultural plunder?



A 19th-century depiction of a dinner party. "Hansom cabs and crinolines have proliferated in fiction set in Victoria's reign," says Nick Rennison



FICTION

Modern classics

NICK RENNISON looks back at the huge growth in historical fiction in the 16 years since BBC History Magazine's launch

Historical fiction has never been more popular than in the past 16 years. Some eras have become less in vogue but, overall, more people are now reading stories set in the past than ever before. There may be fewer medieval mysteries than in the 1990s, but other times have come to the fore.

Bernard Cornwell's switch from Napoleonic Europe to the reign of Alfred the Great has heralded a new interest in Dark Ages Britain. And, at the other end of the spectrum, as the 1960s have receded further into history, they have increasingly provided subject matter for contemporary historical novels. The key word continues to be variety, and every period in British history has found its chroniclers.

The Tudor court has provided the backdrop for writers as different as Hilary Mantel, Philippa Gregory and CJ Sansom. Hansom cabs and crinolines have proliferated in fiction set in Victoria's reign, from epic literary novels such as Michel Faber's *The Crimson Petal and the White* (Canongate, 2002) to the crime stories of Anne Perry. Meanwhile outstanding US writers have been exploring their own

history, and major figures in Canadian and Australian literature have focused upon events that have shaped those nations. And, in just the past few years, excellent novels have been written about places and times as varied as 14th-century China – see John Spurling's *The Ten Thousand Things* (Gerald Duckworth, 2014) and 1950s Malaya – as in Tan Twan Eng's *The Garden of Evening Mists* (Mrymidon, 2014).

No genre of fiction is without its titles set in the past: thousands of historical crime novels are matched by similar numbers of historical romances. There is even a subgenre of science fiction that explores history's counterfactuals. What might have happened if the confederates had won the American Civil War? Read the novels of Harry Turtledove and find out.

For anybody who loves both history and the novel, the 21st century has already proved something of a golden age. For fans of literary fiction and devotees of genre fiction alike, the choice of what to read is enormous. **H**

Nick Rennison is author of *Carver's Truth*, set to be published by Corvus in August

FIVE GREAT NOVELS OF THE 21ST CENTURY

The Crimson Petal and the White

Michel Faber (2002)

Once described as "the first great 19th-century novel of the 21st century", Faber's epic work traces the history of Sugar, a resourceful and strong-minded prostitute, as she journeys through the class-ridden society of Victorian London.

The Night Watch

Sarah Waters (2006)

Sarah Waters' story of love and secrets in 1940s London moves cleverly back in time, opening in 1947 with her central characters adrift in postwar London and then returning, first to 1944 and then to 1941, to reveal the experiences that have shaped them.

Imperium

Robert Harris (2006)

In the first of Harris's magnificent sequence of novels devoted to the Roman orator and politician Cicero, he brings the grandeur and corruption of Republican Rome vividly to life as his hero steers his way through the dangerous whirlpool of the era's politics.

Wolf Hall

Hilary Mantel (2009)

Thomas Cromwell's relentless rise from humble beginnings to Henry VIII's right-hand man is the subject of this ambitious, gripping narrative. Hilary Mantel seamlessly blends historical research with her own invention to produce a novel of great verve and vitality.

All the Light We Cannot See

Anthony Doerr (2014)

Set largely in occupied France, Doerr's powerful, page-turning story won the 2015 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. It tells the story of a blind French girl, daughter of a worker at Paris's Museum of Natural History, and a young German soldier, whose lives converge on the coast of Normandy in 1944.

TV & RADIO

Jutland remembered

The Navy's Bloodiest Day

TV BBC Two, scheduled for late May

A century ago, on 31 May 1916, the Royal Navy and the German Imperial Fleet clashed in the waters off Denmark's Jutland peninsula. The British, outnumbering the Germans by 151 ships to 99, expected victory, but by the end of the battle the navy had lost 14 ships and more than 6,000 men. In a one-off documentary, Dan Snow, engineer Shini Somara and naval historian Nick Hewitt analyse what occurred. Plus, in *The Centenary of the Battle of Jutland* (BBC One, 31 May), there's full coverage of commemoration events. In *Jutland: The Battle that Won the War* (Radio 4, May), Lord West offers his take on the battle.



Muir's recordings capture his time embedded with Kurds in northern Iraq

Scenes from a rebellion

Iraq's Kurds, From Flight to Freedom

RADIO BBC World Service
scheduled for Saturday 21 May

In 1991, journalist Jim Muir spent six weeks in Iraq during the Kurdish uprising against Saddam Hussein. "I was recording a lot of material, but there were no communications so no way to get them out," he says. These recordings form the basis of a documentary that tells how the Kurds rose in the aftermath of the first Gulf War, a prelude to the establishment of a Kurdish sovereign enclave.

Find our interview with Jim Muir at historyextra.com/bbchistorymagazine

Grand designs

David Wolstencroft tells us about the place of the Sun King's palace in helping Louis XIV consolidate power

Versailles

TV, BBC Two
scheduled for late May

Architecture as a weapon. At first glance, it's not the most promising theme for drama, but it's nonetheless central to *Versailles*, a big-budget historical epic that explores how and why France's Louis XIV (1638–1715), whom we meet in his 20s, came to construct his vast palace just outside Paris.

"It's such an unexpected move, it's like moving the Houses of Parliament to Brighton," writer and producer David Wolstencroft tells *BBC History Magazine*. "The mass of opposition [this causes] and the pattern interruption that represents – it's rather brilliant."

The palace was both a way to get away from the Parisian power bases of his ministers and other vested interests, and to force them to live in a "gilded cage" where the king held sway.

"I'm sure it was exhausting because you had to be on, manoeuvring and moving up the greasy poll somehow," says Wolstencroft. "Your apartments would be nothing like your stately home. It was a bit like going to Birmingham NEC to live for six months of the year on

the floor of an exhibition, trying to get a meeting with the CEO." Stories of some of these courtiers defecating in the corridors, however, are "greatly exaggerated". While there wasn't necessarily plumbing, "there were roving toilets so you could pay to go".

As to what Versailles might tell us about Louis' own character, that's more difficult to say. The king built Versailles around his father's hunting lodge, refusing against the protests of his architects to have the original structure demolished. "Psychopaths and sociopaths like to work in terrain they know," says Wolstencroft. And yet, he adds, for all Louis could be ruthless, the king also did much to modernise feudal France.

Whatever your take on Louis, his story makes for fantastic drama, especially when his brother Philippe is also in the picture, "a sort of Jason Bourne in a dress who really went against the stereotype of the effete, camp, transvestite – raised as a girl, but he was a magnificent warrior". To accompany the series, *Versailles, Palace of the Playboy King* (BBC Two) finds Lucy Worsley and Helen Castor exploring how Louis came to be Europe's longest-serving absolute monarch. **H**



"Whatever your take on Louis, his story makes for fantastic drama"

George Blagden plays the ruthless moderniser Louis XIV in *Versailles*



Suzannah Lipscomb
uncovers the dangers
lurking in the 50s home



Bright, shiny, deadly

Hidden Killers of the Post-War Home

TV BBC Four, scheduled for 25 May

In the early 1950s, as memories of the war and austerity began to fade, Britain suddenly became a brighter place. "After the Festival of Britain, there's a kind of [new] ideal of what the home should look like, drawing on the modernism of the 1930s, a kind of Bauhaus look, but a softer version of that," says Dr Suzannah Lipscomb.

But, as the title of the latest *Hidden Killers* documentary suggests, not all the new items Britons brought into their homes were wholly safe. The growth in

the use of plastics, for instance, saw a boom in the sale of polyurethane sofas. They were comfy, but highly flammable and Britain was a nation of smokers.

"When polyurethane burns, it gives off cyanide," says Lipscomb. "There are really profound problems being introduced into the home with all these bright, colourful, shiny things."

Other markers of a new affluence were equally dangerous. Take the craze for chemistry sets aimed at children. "In the US, they would even put in uranium dust and a Geiger counter – extraordinary."

You can read more of this interview at historyextra.com/bbchistorymagazine

Debate and dissent

Dick Cavett's Vietnam

DVD (PBS America, £14.99)

Dick Cavett didn't necessarily intend his chat show to become a place where debate about the Vietnam war was aired, but that's how things turned out. From 1968, when his show debuted on ABC, through to the fall of Saigon in 1975, it was a subject that came up again and again, both reflecting and shaping a wider debate about whether US soldiers should be fighting in Asia. In one show, for instance, a young veteran named John Kerry, later to succeed Hilary Clinton as US secretary of state,

spoke out against the war. Jane Fonda too expressed her opposition to the conflict as Cavett's guest.

This brought him into conflict with authority. An increasingly paranoid Nixon, for example, was concerned enough to ask his hatchet man Charles Colson, as detailed on the Watergate tapes: "Is there any way we can screw him? There must be ways."

In the end, as this excellent disc mixing archive footage with new material reveals, Cavett not only survived but prospered because he was

supremely good at his job, an urbane and perceptive interviewer equally at home interviewing celebrities or heavyweight political figures.



Cavett was pivotal in shaping the public attitude to the 'first television war'

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Arctic Convoy Disaster explores the hazards on the icy route to Russia

For British soldiers posted to Burma and India during the Second World War, when transcontinental transport was undertaken largely by ship, there was little hope of getting back to Blighty for a break. To maintain morale and a sense of connection with home, the authorities arranged for soldiers to send filmed messages back, to be viewed in cinemas by loved ones. **Messages Home: Lost Films of the British Army** (Channel 4, June) gathers together surviving *Calling Blighty* films and traces the relatives of some of those who recorded messages.

On Saturday 21 May, Channel 5 will screen an Egypt night, including documentaries entitled **The Real Rameses** and **Secrets of the Sphinx**. Over the same weekend, Yesterday's 'Cruel Seas Weekend' will include documentaries on the *Mary Celeste*, *Titanic* and Arctic convoys.

Presented by Tracy Borman, **The Private Lives of the Tudors** (Yesterday, Tuesday 7 June) is a three-part series that explores the more private aspects of life at court for Henry VII's descendants. (To read Tracy's feature on the Tudors, turn to page 62.)

For those with satellite or cable, cult hit **Forged in Fire** (History, Thursday 19 May) is a kind of *Bake Off* for blades, in which those with blacksmithing skills make weapons. On National Geographic, series three of **Nazi Megastructures** (Tuesday 24 May) continues into early June and includes a programme on the Type XXI submarine, the first subs designed to operate primarily submerged.

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OUT & ABOUT

HISTORY EXPLORER

The Second Barons' War

Nicholas Vincent and Spencer Mizen visit **Kenilworth Castle**, where one of the most dramatic conflicts to engulf medieval England reached a climax

Fragrant Elizabethan gardens, check. Rolling Warwickshire countryside, check. Dramatic medieval ruins basking in the sunshine, check. To a lover of history – and a few hours of unbridled tranquility – a visit to Kenilworth Castle on an unseasonably warm spring morning can seem like heaven. It wasn't always like this though. Rewind the clock seven and a half centuries to 1266 and this place would have been a vision of hell.

Back then, the great Norman keep that dominates the landscape wouldn't have been home to carefree day-trippers but hundreds of desperate rebels, holed up in what was one of the longest sieges in English history.

These men's six-month ordeal – assailed by King Henry III's fearsome siege weapons and a diabolical combination of disease and hunger – marked the climax of one of the greatest storms to blow through medieval England: the Second Barons' War.

The Second Barons' War? It hardly enjoys the same notoriety as the Norman Conquest or the Wars of the Roses, does it? Yet, as Nicholas Vincent, professor of medieval history at the University of East Anglia, explains, it involved "mutilation, intrigue, escapes, ambushes and bloodletting on a huge scale". And some of its most dramatic incidents took place under the shadow of Kenilworth's keep.

The Second Barons' War was a set-to between royalist forces – led by King Henry III – and a group of baronial rebels, who were dominated by his

brother-in-law Simon de Montfort.

As its name suggests, it was in many ways a reprise of the First Barons' War (1215–17), when major landowners – enraged by the refusal of Henry's father, John, to implement Magna Carta – rebelled and threw their weight behind a French invasion of England.

The settlement at the end of the First Barons' War was meant to resolve the differences between the monarchy and barons. That it didn't, says Vincent, had much to do with Henry III's autocratic style of rule. "Henry had a nasty habit of infuriating the most powerful men in England – by, for example, liberally handing out riches and favours to his friends in France.

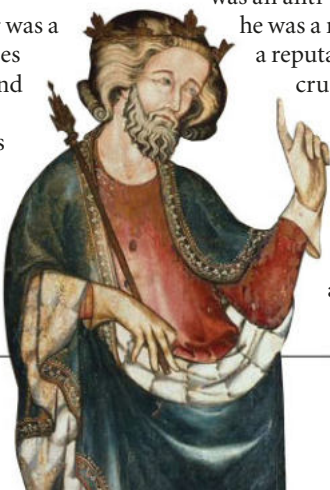
"To compound the problem, he was terrible with money, wasting it on great displays of art at court, or in pursuing his dreams of reconquering his family's lands in France. Then, in the 1250s, he got mixed up in crusades to north Africa and a hair-brained attempt to buy Sicily off the pope. The trouble is, of course, he couldn't afford it."

And he was soon to pay the price. For among the many men that the king had alienated through his profligacy and favouritism was Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, who had been granted Kenilworth Castle in the 1240s.

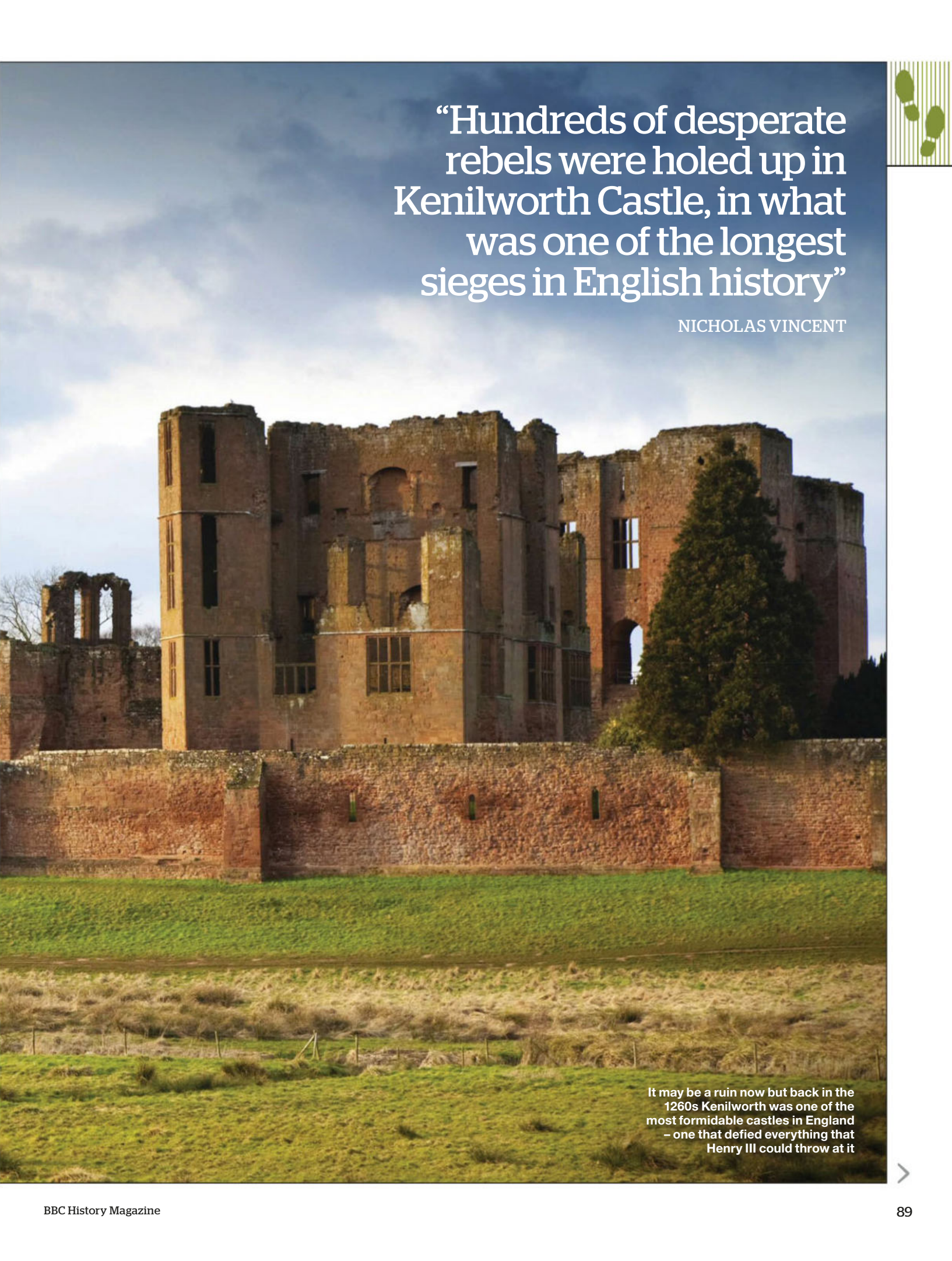
"De Montfort was a charismatic but complicated character," says Vincent. "He was an anti-Semite, a religious fanatic. But he was a man of action who had earned a reputation as a brilliant warrior on crusade in the Holy Land."

De Montfort's brilliance – and his ego – set him up as a dangerous rival to Henry. A few years earlier, he had enraged the king by marrying Henry's sister, Eleanor – just after she had taken a vow of

Henry III had "a nasty habit of infuriating the most powerful men in England"



ALAMY/CORBIS

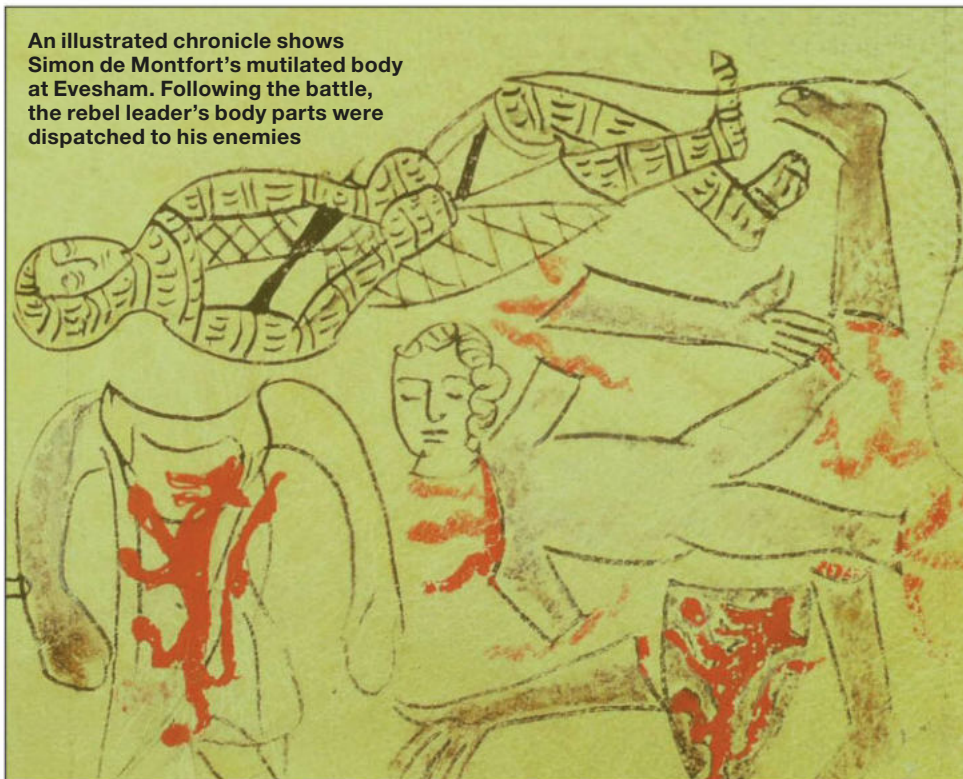
A photograph of the ruins of Kenilworth Castle, a large stone structure with multiple towers and battlements, situated on a grassy hill. The sky is blue with some clouds. A large green tree is visible on the right side of the castle.

“Hundreds of desperate rebels were holed up in Kenilworth Castle, in what was one of the longest sieges in English history”

NICHOLAS VINCENT

It may be a ruin now but back in the 1260s Kenilworth was one of the most formidable castles in England – one that defied everything that Henry III could throw at it

An illustrated chronicle shows Simon de Montfort's mutilated body at Evesham. Following the battle, the rebel leader's body parts were dispatched to his enemies



celibacy. Then Henry had returned the favour by meddling in de Montfort's attempts to administer the royal estates in Gascony. In short, there was little love lost between the two men – and so, in the late 1250s, with baronial disaffection with the king soaring, de Montfort made his move.

Radical restrictions

"The first direct threat to Henry's power came in 1258 when a posse of armed barons turned up at Westminster Hall and demanded that the king reform the realm," says Vincent. "At first, it seemed that the barons' ploy had worked, for in 1259 Henry introduced a series of constitutional reforms, known as the Provisions of Westminster, that proposed setting up a committee of barons to rule England with the king, and to restrict his powers of patronage. The trouble is, in 1261, Henry repudiated the provisions."

By doing so, the king made an armed confrontation all but inevitable. Simon de Montfort was soon raising a rebel army and, having canvassed the support of the people of London, met Henry's forces in battle at Lewes, now East Sussex, in May 1264.

What happened next was remarkable. Not only did de Montfort's rebels rout their

royalist enemies, they took the king prisoner and captured his son, the future Edward I.

The owner of Kenilworth Castle was now the most powerful man in England, one with the authority to instigate one of the most significant political developments of the 13th century – the meeting of what is widely termed as the first English parliament. "This was a momentous turning point in English history," says Vincent, "because de Montfort summoned not just representatives of the counties but also the boroughs. This was the first meeting of what we call the House of 'Commons', and the establishment of a franchise that lasted for centuries."

Yet even as de Montfort was changing the course of political history, he was busy squandering the respect he'd earned from his spectacular victory at Lewes.

"Before you know it, he was doing exactly what Henry had done before him – enriching himself and his sons, seizing rivals' resources and cheating landowners out of their inheritance," says Vincent. It was a style of rule that would soon backfire.

Things started to turn sour for de Montfort on 28 May 1265, when Prince Edward escaped from captivity. Edward quickly retook Gloucester and Worcester for his father and, with both armies preparing

for a showdown in the Worcestershire town of Evesham, landed a withering blow on baronial forces right outside the gates of Kenilworth Castle.

"Simon de Montfort's son, also called Simon, was camped just outside Kenilworth with his troops, when they were ambushed and routed by a detachment led by Edward," says Vincent. "This proved a serious blow to de Montfort, as the chroniclers tell us that on the following day, as he waited to do battle at Evesham, he was heartened by the sight of his son's banners approaching from over the horizon – before realising, to his horror, that these banners were, in fact, being carried by Edward."

Edward's skulduggery threw de Montfort's army into confusion, and set the scene for the decisive day in the Second Barons' War. The rebel army was massacred, King Henry (who had travelled to Evesham in de Montfort's baggage train) freed, and de Montfort hacked down and mutilated. To add grim insult to injury, his killers cut off his testicles and dispatched various body parts to his enemies as proof of his demise.

It was an act of vicious ferocity, and a fate that the surviving rebels were all-too keen to avoid. So, as their lands were gradually gobbled up by opportunistic loyalists and Edward's army circled for the kill, a few hundred of them eventually headed to the mighty fortress of Kenilworth for sanctuary.

Even today, Kenilworth's massive Norman

BRIDGEMAN/ENGLISH HERITAGE

WITH PRINCE EDWARD CIRCLING FOR THE KILL, A FEW HUNDRED REBELS HEADED TO KENILWORTH CASTLE FOR SANCTUARY



VISIT

Kenilworth Castle



Castle Green, Kenilworth CV8 1NE
english-heritage.org.uk

keep – constructed by Geoffrey de Clinton, lord chamberlain to Henry I, in the 1120s – dominates the surrounding landscape. Back in the 1260s, however, it didn't just look formidable, it *was* formidable. And it had recently been supplemented by a new stone outer bailey wall and two towers – all added by Henry's father, John, between 1210 and 1216.

John had also dammed two nearby brooks, creating one of the largest artificial lake defences in England and surrounding the castle with water on three sides. In doing so, he had made his son's task of eeking the rebels out all but impossible.

"Henry called for miners to undermine the castle but the water wouldn't allow them to get close enough," says Vincent. "He called up his greatest siege engines – including one that was called the Bear (presumably because it was enormous and rather scary) but still to no avail."

Not for moving

If Henry needed any evidence that Kenilworth's defenders were a determined bunch, it came when one of the king's messengers returned from the castle – after a failed attempt at negotiation – with his hand chopped off.

But, where force of arms failed in dislodging the besieged rebels, it seems that hunger and disease succeeded. "By the time winter set in, conditions in the castle would have

been pretty intolerable," says Vincent. "Food was short, illness rife. Dirt would have been lying around, stinking and rotting."

And so, in December 1266, after six long months, the rebels finally trooped out to meet their fates. "Yet, crucially," says Vincent, "Henry didn't string them up – as he'd done following a siege of Bedford in 1224. Instead, he let them go home, even giving them their lands back, as long as they used the annual income from those lands to pay off a ransom he had put on their heads."

The Second Barons' War was effectively over but its repercussions would be felt down the centuries. "It would change England for good," says Vincent. "Through de Montfort's first parliament, it did much to shape modern democracy. On a darker note, this was the first time since 1066 that a major political leader in England had been killed on the battlefield – so setting the scene for the slaying of the upper classes that became a feature of the late Middle Ages."

As for Kenilworth Castle, it eventually passed into the hands of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester – the famed admirer of Elizabeth I – but not before playing its part in the genesis of another bloody medieval conflict.

"After the Second Barons' War, Henry III gave the castle to his son Edmund as part of the Duchy of Lancaster. And it was with the resources of this huge new power base that Henry Bolingbroke rebelled against Richard II and seized power as Henry IV in 1399. That provided the spark for the Wars of the Roses. Those sparks were first struck here, in Kenilworth, in 1266." **H**



Historical advisor: **Nicholas Vincent** (left), professor of medieval history at the University of East Anglia.
 Words: Spencer Mizen

SECOND BARONS' WAR FIVE MORE PLACES TO EXPLORE

1 Westminster Hall, LONDON Where the barons confronted Henry

Westminster Hall has witnessed its fair share of historic incidents since it was built in 1097, perhaps none more sensational than when, in 1258, leading barons stormed in and demanded that Henry III change the way he ran the country. They got their way – temporarily – but it wasn't enough to prevent war.
parliament.uk

2 Rochester Castle

KENT

Where loyalist forces were besieged

Kenilworth Castle wasn't the only fortification to be besieged in the Second Barons' War. In 1264, Simon de Montfort's army attempted to prise out loyalist forces – led by the royal constable Roger de Leybourne – holed up in Rochester. They failed but would soon exact revenge at Lewes.

english-heritage.org.uk

3 Lewes Castle

EAST SUSSEX

Where Henry prepared for battle

Henry III took shelter in Lewes Castle before engaging the rebel forces in what was arguably the most dismal day in his 56-year reign. De Montfort's army took the king prisoner – and, for good measure, captured his son, Edward, and brother Richard too. You can also visit a monument to the battle of Lewes near the site where it is believed to have been fought.

sussexpast.co.uk

4 Gloucester

Where Edward was held captive

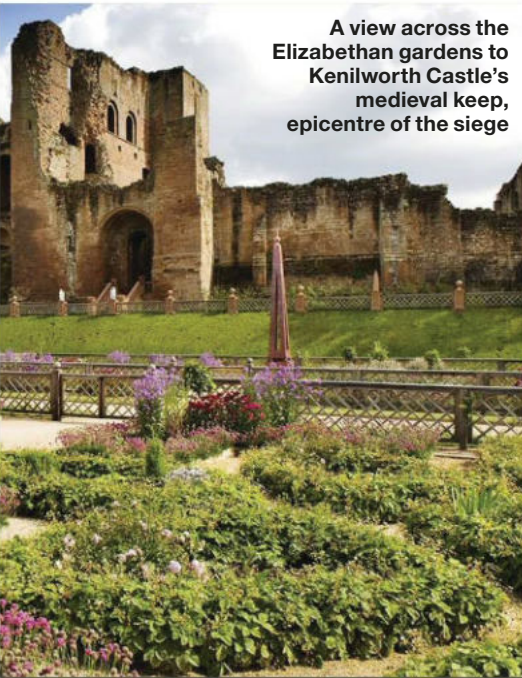
Prince Edward was held prisoner in Gloucester Castle after the royalist army's defeat at Lewes, before making a dramatic escape. The castle no longer exists but you can visit the tomb of his son, Edward II, at the city's cathedral. The son's murder was in many ways a consequence of the violence first unleashed by his father at Evesham. gloucestercathedral.co.uk

5 Evesham, WORCESTERSHIRE

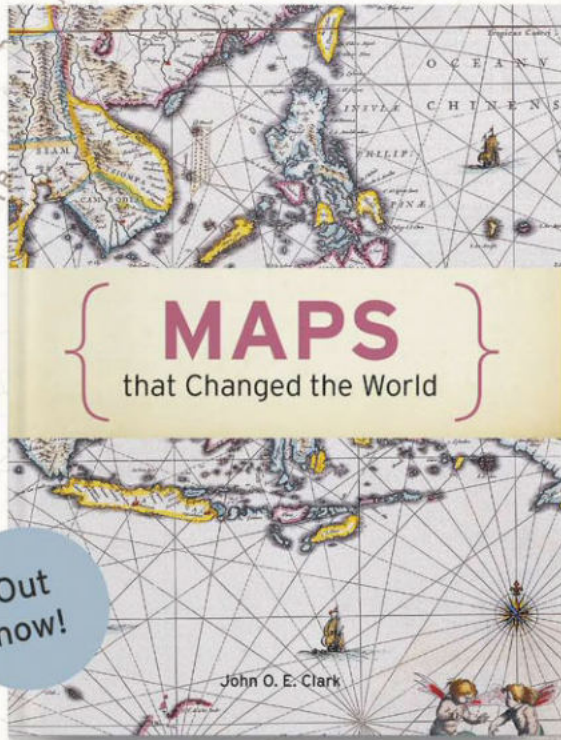
Where the rebels were massacred

Simon de Montfort's dreams of cementing his position as the dominant force in England came to a decisive – and grotesque – end at the battle of Evesham, in a field just north of the market town. You can visit the scene of the rebel leader's last stand, and then head to Evesham Abbey where de Montfort is buried. eveshamtown.co.uk

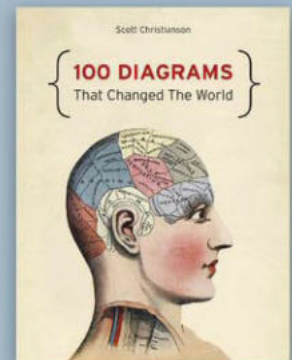
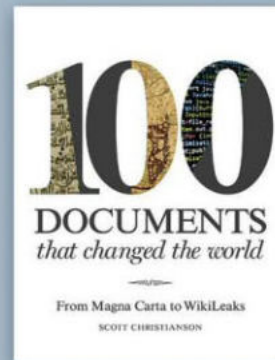
A view across the Elizabethan gardens to Kenilworth Castle's medieval keep, epicentre of the siege



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FIVE THINGS TO DO IN JUNE

Back in time for battle

EVENT

Chalke Valley History Festival

Wiltshire

27 June–3 July

☎ 01722 781133

● cvhf.org.uk



The UK's largest history festival features talks, discussions and debates plus re-enactments and a historic air show. Living history demonstrations and displays will cover 2,000 years of history from the Romans to a Second World War battle with artillery, infantry and tanks in action – including a Sherman and a Cromwell. At the weekend, the airshow has a line-up of historic craft in the air, including an Avro Lancaster, Hawker Hurricane and Spitfire Mk IX.

Visitors can take part in activities ranging from arts and crafts activities to a commando training course or sword school. Other displays that offer the chance to get involved range from Tudor music and dance to American War of Independence musketry.

There will be a major focus on King Alfred's battle for Wessex. An Anglo-Saxon settlement will feature a hundred re-enactors and the high point will be Alfred the Great's victory at the Battle of Ethandun in 878. These activities tie in with talks by experts Michael Wood and Tom Holland.

The line-up of eminent historians also includes Niall Ferguson, Sir Barry Cunliffe and Hew Strachan – all speaking at the festival for the first time. They will be joined by Second World War veterans.

On a less serious note, the event features what is billed as 'a blitz party' with live bands, the London Swing Orchestra and the D-Day Darlings, plus a wartime-inspired supper.



Re-enactors go through their paces at the Chalke Valley History Festival, where displays cover periods from 2,000 years of history

NEW VISITOR CENTRE

Shakespeare's Schoolroom and Guildhall

Stratford-upon-Avon

● shakespeareschoolroom.org

The medieval schoolroom where Shakespeare was educated and the Guildhall where he first experienced live theatre recently opened to the public for the first time, 400 years after his death. In this new attraction, visitors are promised a glimpse of his formative years and can even take part in a live Tudor school lesson with a 'Master'.



Shakespeare's schoolroom is now open to the public

EVENT

Eboracum Roman Festival

York

1–5 June

☎ 01904 687687

● yorkshiremuseum.org.uk

Military parades, siege weapon demonstrations, talks, guided walks and workshops all feature at this festival based around the Yorkshire Museum and Gardens. Roman soldiers will march through the city and events take place at several venues, including a talk by Egyptologist Joann Fletcher.

EXHIBITION

Surreal Encounters

Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh
4 June–11 September

☎ 0131 624 6200

● nationalgalleries.org

This exhibition explores the full breadth of the surrealist movement through four notable private collections. It will examine the different impulses behind the collections and, by showing them together, will be able to present a fuller and richer picture of the surrealist movement as a whole. Artists represented include René Magritte, Salvador Dalí, André Breton and Joan Miró.

EXHIBITION / FREE ENTRY

Fields of Battle

1 June–3 July
Guildhall Yard, London

● Fieldsofbattle1418.org

This outdoor exhibition shows portraits of First World War battlefields. It contrasts images of the present-day battle sites by photographer Michael St Maur Sheil with archive pictures of the trenches during the war. The theme is the scars of the western front and the remedial power of nature. On 16 June at the Guildhall Library there will be a presentation by the artist (booking essential, fee applies, see thesomme.eventbrite.co.uk).

MY FAVOURITE PLACE

Kathmandu, Nepal



by **Yasmin Khan**

For the latest in our historical holidays series, Yasmin visits a city whose historic heart is packed with ancient temples

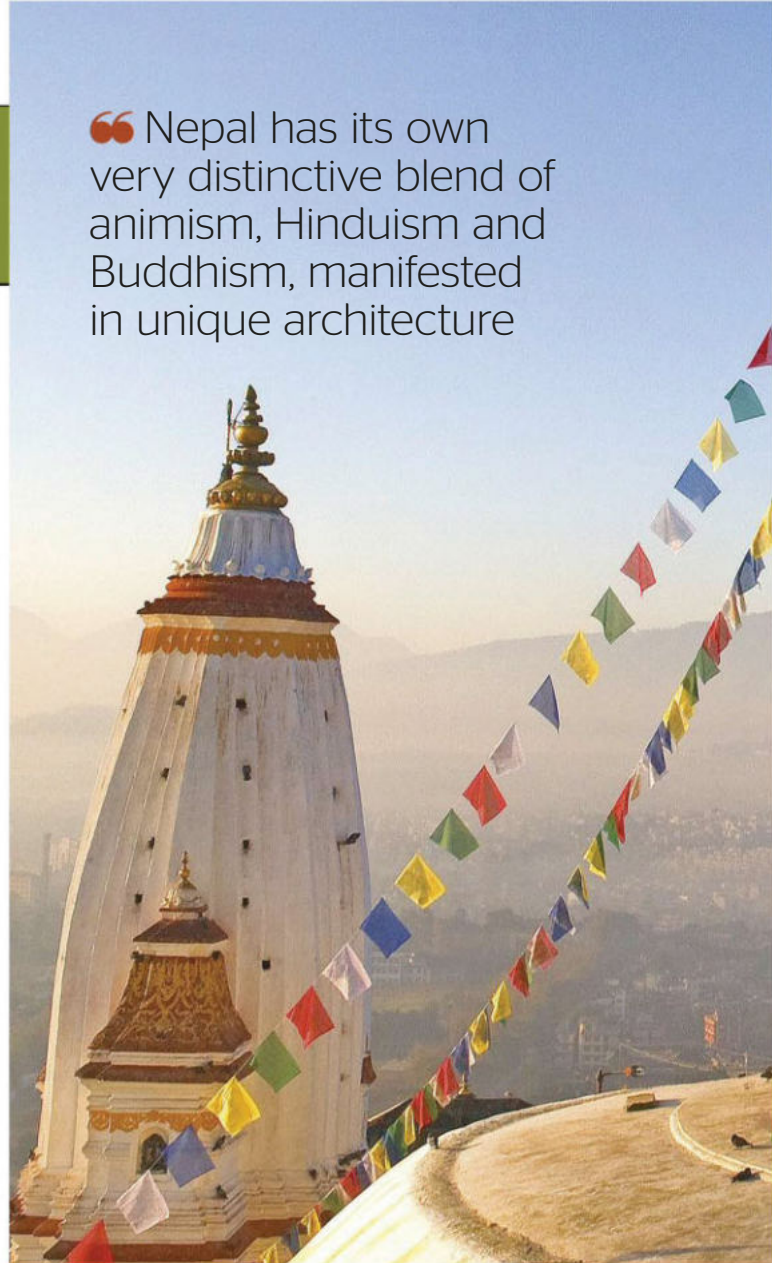
Legend has it that the Kathmandu valley was once filled by a lake. In the centre of the lake grew a vast sacred lotus flower, encrusted with diamonds and rubies, with a fire burning at its centre. This was a manifestation of divinity, right at the heart of Nepal – and the seed of the country's capital, Kathmandu. Today, the city has all the hallmarks of a rapidly developing Asian city, with new buildings constructed on layers of myth, legend and history.

Kathmandu has tripled in size since 1996, when I first visited as a backpacker. City-dwellers used to be able to admire the peaks of the Himalayas ranged on the northern horizon. Now the city is often shrouded by smoggy pollution. The roads are jammed with traffic and it hums with the thrill of rapid growth. The city is faced with the challenges of such a boom, not least how to protect its historic monuments.

Kathmandu is also still recovering from the shattering earthquake of April 2015 that killed more than 8,000 people and wrecked much of the city's heritage and

infrastructure, though rebuilding and restoration is already well advanced.

Sandwiched between Tibet and India, Nepal has its own distinctive blend of animism, Hinduism and Buddhism, manifested in unique architecture. In some places the Buddhist influence is strongest, such as at the stupa complex of Swayambunath that's on every tourist's wish list. One of the most ancient sites in Kathmandu, the stupa is at least 1,500 years old (stories recount a visit by the Indian emperor Ashoka in the third century BC). Climbing the stone pilgrims' stairway on its eastern flank, you emerge high above Kathmandu. The



“Nepal has its own very distinctive blend of animism, Hinduism and Buddhism, manifested in unique architecture

Buddha's eyes, painted on four gilded sides of the temple, gaze down from above the white dome of the stupa onto the city below. Prayer flags flutter everywhere and prayer wheels rumble as you spin them.

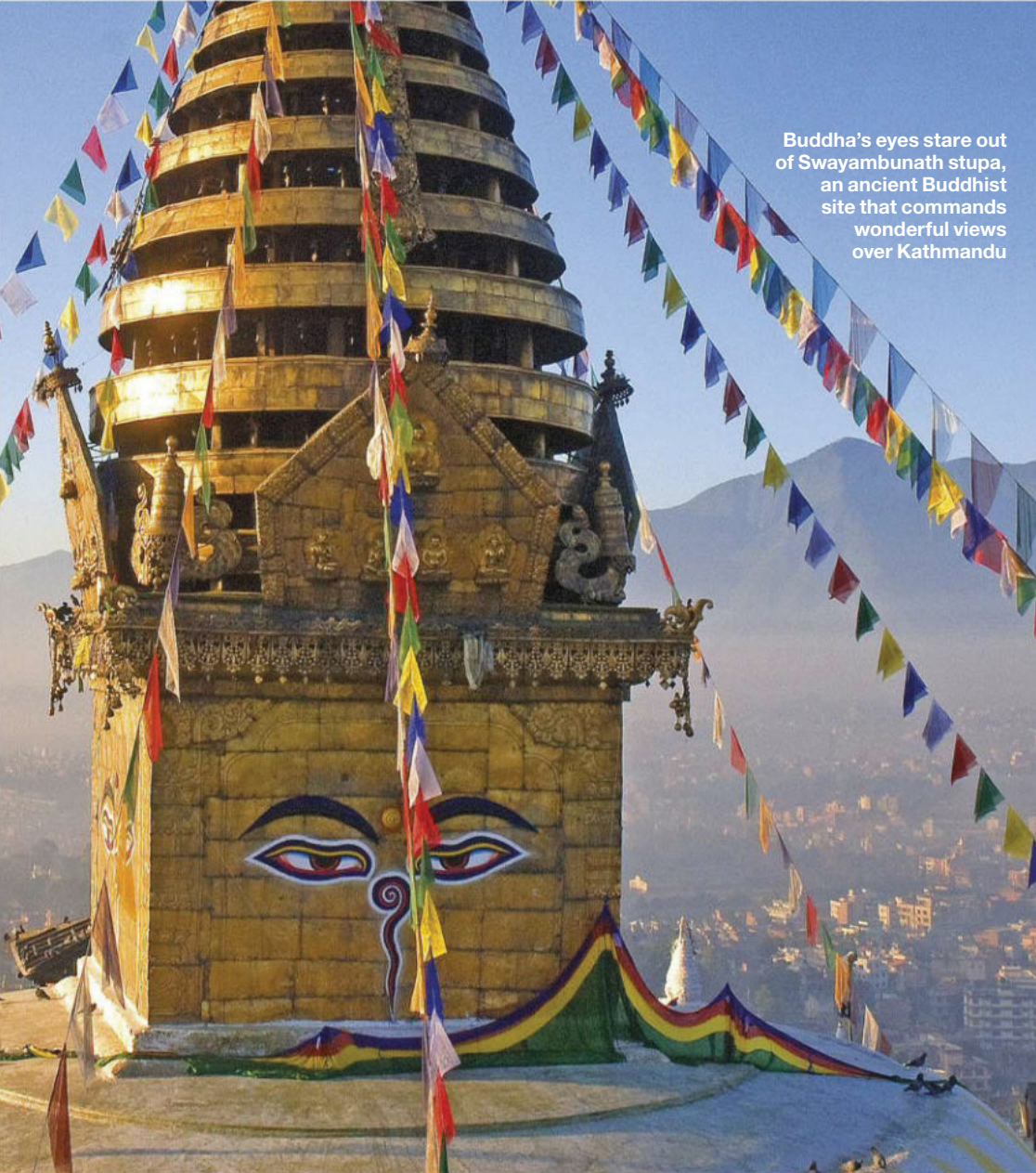
Many different ethnic groups share Kathmandu, but the cultural influence of the Newar people is inescapable, especially in Patan, the capital's twin city lying south of the Bagmati river. Here, intricately gabled wooden houses surround peaceful courtyards, and a cluster of Buddhist monasteries still forms the bedrock of

the old city. Patan's lanes throng with life. Watch artisans working at bronze, stone or wood sculptures, or painstakingly colouring *thangkas* (Buddhist cloth paintings), and you can imagine the city as it was in the 16th and 17th centuries. Patan Museum is a gem, set in an 18th-century palace housing hundreds of Hindu and Buddhist sculptures.

About three miles south-west of Kathmandu is Kirtipur, besieged in 1768 by Prithvi Narayan Shah, the Gorkha leader credited with unifying Nepal. According to local myth, when he finally broke through, Shah's armies sliced off the noses and lips of all the men in Kirtipur – apart from those who could play wind instruments.

An artist at work in a shop in Patan, the twin city that lies across the river to the south of Kathmandu

GETTY IMAGES/ALAMY/MAP – MARTIN SANDERS



Buddha's eyes stare out of Swayambunath stupa, an ancient Buddhist site that commands wonderful views over Kathmandu

ADVICE FOR TRAVELLERS

BEST TIME TO GO

The monsoon drenches Nepal between June and September. Visit at any other time for dry weather, though nights can be bitterly cold in midwinter. October and November are popular months for trekking, while March and April bring colourful rhododendron blossoms.

GETTING THERE

There are no direct flights to Kathmandu from the UK. The most convenient routes involve a change in the Middle East or Delhi.

WHAT TO PACK

Bring both light clothes for the daytime (ideally with long sleeves and legs, for visiting temples) and warm layers for the evenings; Kathmandu sits at an altitude of 1,400m and can get chilly at night.

WHAT TO BRING BACK

Local crafts – painted Buddhist thangkas and sculptures – make excellent souvenirs.

READERS' VIEWS

Be aware that many monuments – including Swayambunath – suffered significant damage in the earthquake, and are still undergoing repairs.

@paulbtravel

Be sure to visit the massive Buddhist stupa at Boudhanath, east of the centre.

Sarah Baxter

The temple of Bagh Bhairab is adorned with swords and shields reputedly seized from the defeated soldiers. In the evenings, the temple courtyard fills with people listening to religious songs at dusk.

The durbar (royal) squares are crammed with temples whose architecture is quite different from styles prevalent in neighbouring India and China. Multi-roofed, rising up to five storeys high, decorated with gold and bells, with burning rails of butter lamps, these pagodas are some of the oldest wooden

temples in the world, and they're immensely atmospheric.

Nepal was always important to Asian trade and travellers. Yet it was also far more isolated and protected from British rule than other parts of the subcontinent, managing to keep Europeans out. Until the mid-20th century, only a handful of westerners had visited Nepal and it was slow to open to outsiders; television was only introduced in 1985. The imprint of centuries of royal authority is clear however, although the country has been a republic since 2008.

For many, Nepali history is inextricably linked with the Gurkhas. Today the tradition of exporting manpower continues, and flights out of Kathmandu are full of young men going to

work in Dubai and Qatar. The Nepali diaspora now lives all over the world, and locals deftly import ingredients and recipes. I've had excellent cappuccinos and croissants in Kathmandu. You can even find a decent English fried breakfast – though I would rather tuck into a plate of hot momos (dumplings) or paratha (flat bread). **H**

Yasmin Khan is an associate professor of history at the University of Oxford

Read more about Yasmin's experiences in Kathmandu at historyextra.com/bbchistorymagazine/nepal

Next month: Loyd Grossman explores Bologna in Italy

Been there...

Have you been to **Nepal**? Do you have a top tip for readers? Contact us via Twitter or Facebook

twitter.com/historyextra

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Summer ADVENTURES

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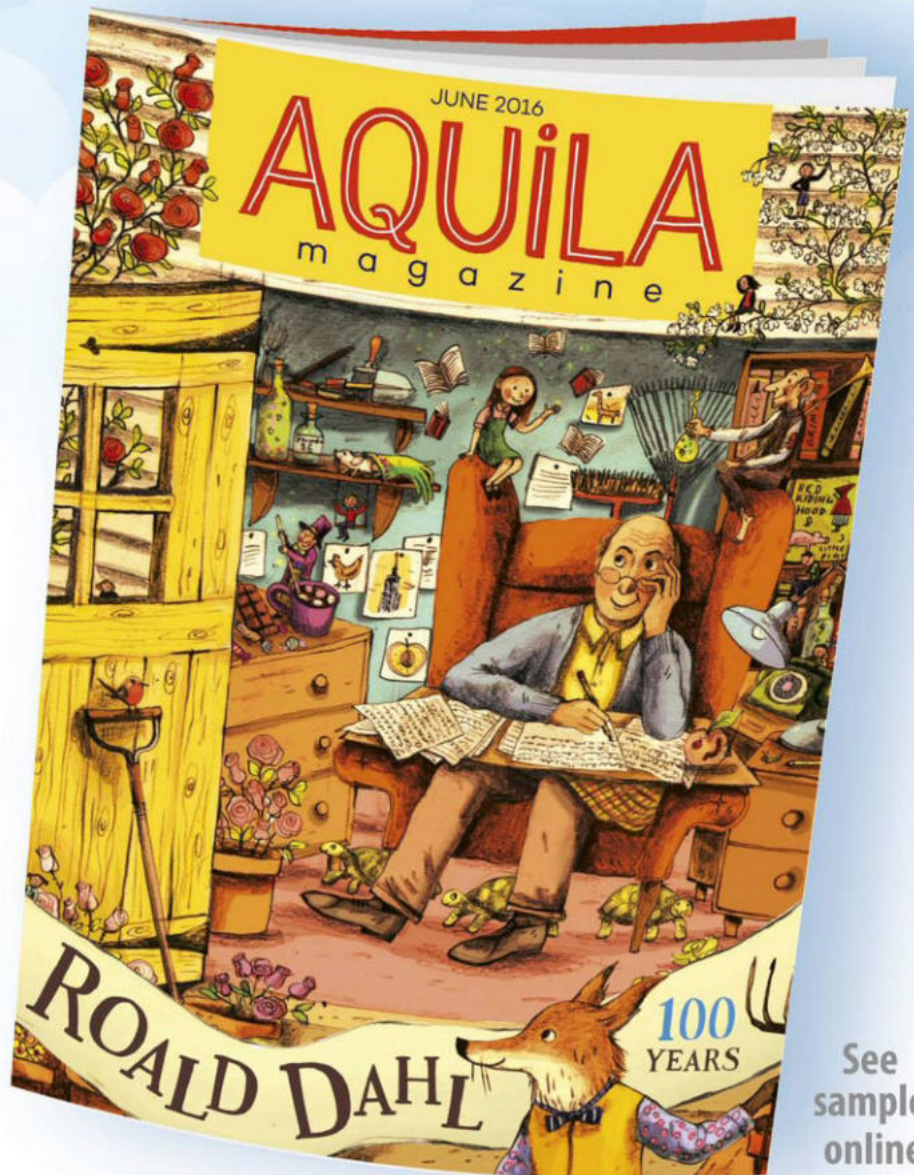
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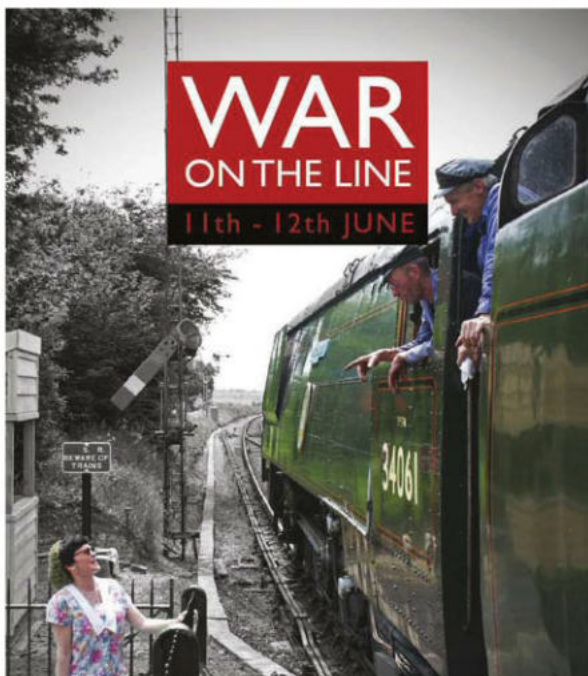
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MISCELLANY

Q&A



QUIZ

BY JULIAN HUMPHRYS

Try your hand at this month's history quiz

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1. Which event of 1385 caused a five-year legal wrangle between Richard Scrope and Robert Grosvenor?

2. Which word, meaning showy but of low quality, is derived from the cheap lace sold at St Audrey's Fair in Ely.

3. Why might Britain's 1st Royal Dragoons have been embarrassed about their colonel-in-chief at the outbreak of the First World War?

4. What was originally founded in 1881 as the 'Fenian Office'?

5. How is the Empress Matilda said to have escaped from the besieged Oxford Castle at Christmas 1142?

6. What is this called and what does it commemorate?



QUIZ ANSWERS

1. They turned up on campaign with the same coat of arms **2.** Tawdry **3.** It was Germany's kaiser Wilhelm II **4.** The Special Branch **5.** By wrapping herself in a white sheet to camouflage herself against the snow **6.** It's the Chattri, a memorial to First World War Hindu and Sikh soldiers who died in the temporary hospital in Brighton's Royal Pavilion and were then cremated here on the downs

GOT A QUESTION?

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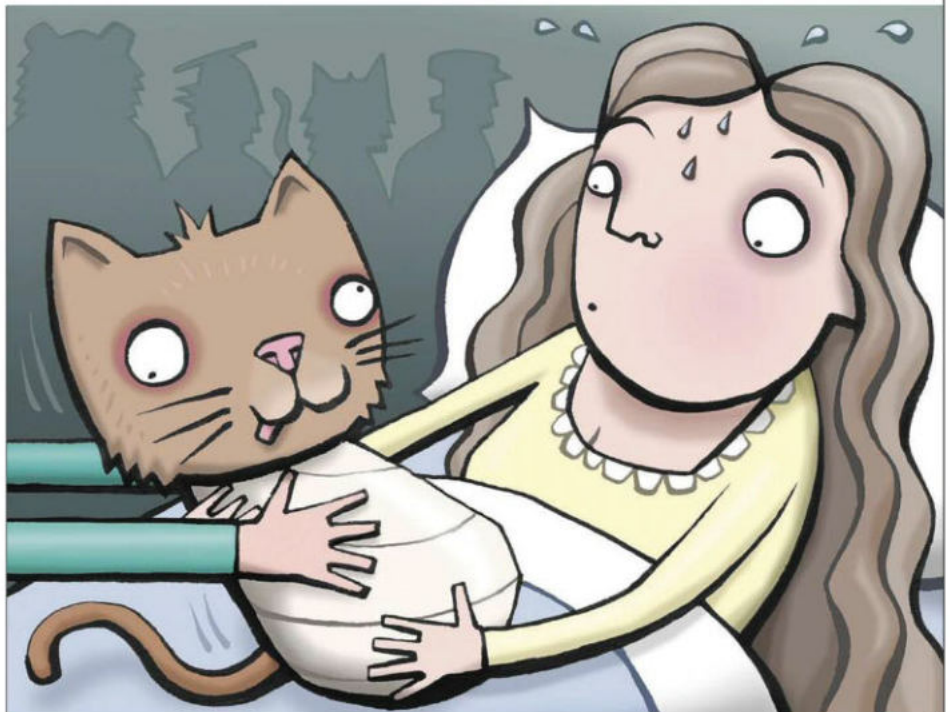


ILLUSTRATION BY GLEN MCBETH

Q Did people really think a woman gave birth to a cat in the 1500s?

Jane Smith, by email

A Agnes Bowker, an unmarried servant, was said to have delivered a cat at Market Harborough in 1569. It was dead and skinned, and while midwife Elizabeth Harrison and others at the birth agreed that it did come from Bowker's body, others were sceptical. It was later established that the cat had lived, and had semi-digested food (bacon in one account) in its stomach, and thus could not have been new-born. The obvious conclusion is that Bowker faked the delivery, presumably to cover the shame of illegitimacy and, more seriously, possible infanticide. She might have been helped by the midwife and/or other witnesses. At various times she claimed she was seduced by a schoolmaster or servant, or had coupled with a bear- or cat-like creature.

The story attracted a lot of attention, not simply as an unusual phenomenon, but also because in the febrile political

and religious atmosphere of the time, some claimed it was an omen, or possibly a Catholic conspiracy. It came to the attention of Elizabeth I's secretary, Sir William Cecil, and to Edmund Grindal, bishop of London.

We should assume many did believe Bowker's story – not just credulous souls who thought it an omen. Some believed it might be possible for 'monstrous' births to result from a coupling between a human and an animal. Many others, though, thought it nonsense. Bishop Grindal wrote to Cecil: "It appeareth plainly to be a counterfeit matter; but yet we cannot extort confessions of the manner of doings."

For a fuller account of the episode, see *Agnes Bowker's Cat: Travesties and Transgressions in Tudor and Stuart England* by David Cressy (OUP, 2000).

Eugene Byrne, author and journalist

SAMANTHA'S RECIPE CORNER



Every issue, picture editor **Samantha Nott** brings you a recipe from the past. This month it's a cake of American origin from 1953, the year of the Queen's coronation

Short on flavour

To celebrate the Queen's 90th birthday (and, a more modest achievement, this magazine's 200th issue), it was time to make a cake. For inspiration I turned to 1953, Her Majesty's coronation year – and the year that sugar and sweets were finally de-rationed after the Second World War. This Springtime Fancy cake came from an advert for Dexo, a US brand of vegetable shortening (used in place of butter). New to the UK at the time, vegetable shortening later became less popular, but is still available.

INGREDIENTS

American cup measures are kept for authenticity:

- ½ cup of non-dairy vegetable shortening
- 2 cups plain flour
- 2½ tsps baking powder
- 1 tsp salt
- 1½ cups sugar
- 1 cup milk
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 2 eggs, unbeaten
- icing (cream together 5oz butter, 10oz icing sugar and food

colouring) decorated with marshmallows and gums

METHOD

Sift dry ingredients onto shortening. Add vanilla and two-thirds of the liquid. Beat for one minute (150 strokes per minute!) Add remaining liquid and the eggs. Beat for two minutes. Turn into two deep 8-inch layer pans. Bake in moderate oven, 190°C, 25 minutes. Cover top and sides with green coloured butter frosting to represent grass. Cut daisy petals from marshmallows and use gum drops for the centres.

VERDICT

Fashions have changed since 1953. The batter smelled like a packet mix, not home made. The cake had an old-fashioned flavour that I recognised from church fête teas from childhood. It had an after taste and was sickeningly sweet too.

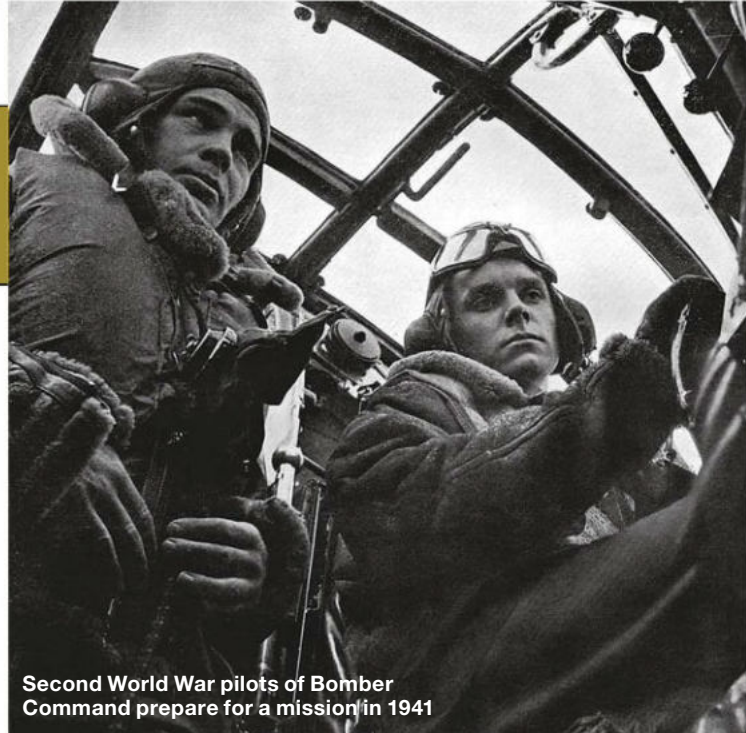
Difficulty: 9/10

Time: 1 hour 30 mins

Recipe from recipe reminiscing.wordpress.com



The 1953 advert promised that my "young man" would turn to Springtime Fancy cake



Second World War pilots of Bomber Command prepare for a mission in 1941

Q My uncle, an RAF captain (1939–45), was incensed when accused of LMF after a dizzy spell (found to be caused by an ear infection). What was LMF?

Sue Ellis, by email

A I am not surprised he was incensed. 'LMF' was a highly pejorative term, standing for Low/Lacking in Moral Fibre, given to servicemen suspected of malingering, especially in the face of the enemy. It was a serious charge, a pseudo-medico/psychological term for someone considered to be a coward, and who (even momentarily) refused to continue fighting in a combat situation. The term was often used, officially, to label men who refused to fly in combat (such as in Bomber Command for instance), or to go on patrol, or who cowered away from the action. Sadly, it was often used by servicemen against each other, describing those who did not or could not pull their weight in a combat environment.

The tragedy of the LMF label is that it was applied in spite of the vast amount of learning gleaned from the First World War about the nature of combat stress ('shell shock'), and the various means discovered

during that war of how to manage the effects of extreme fear of this kind. Medical expert Lord Moran's excellent 'bank account of courage' analogy describes some of these, based on his observation that every man (or woman's) courage goes up or down depending on how much courage they have in their personal bank account at the time. That bank account of courage can be re-charged, or depleted, depending on the circumstances.

The charge that someone was LMF was a serious, and often unfair label, suggesting that at the heart of the individual's persona was a moral weakness that made them a far weaker, less able, less good and less valuable member of the team, the armed forces and, by extension, society. No wonder your uncle was angry! It was the worst possible stigma a serviceman could ever face.

Robert Lyman, author of *Headhunters* (Perseus, 2016)

PRIZE CROSSWORD

What was the family castle of the late Queen Mother?
(see 22 down)



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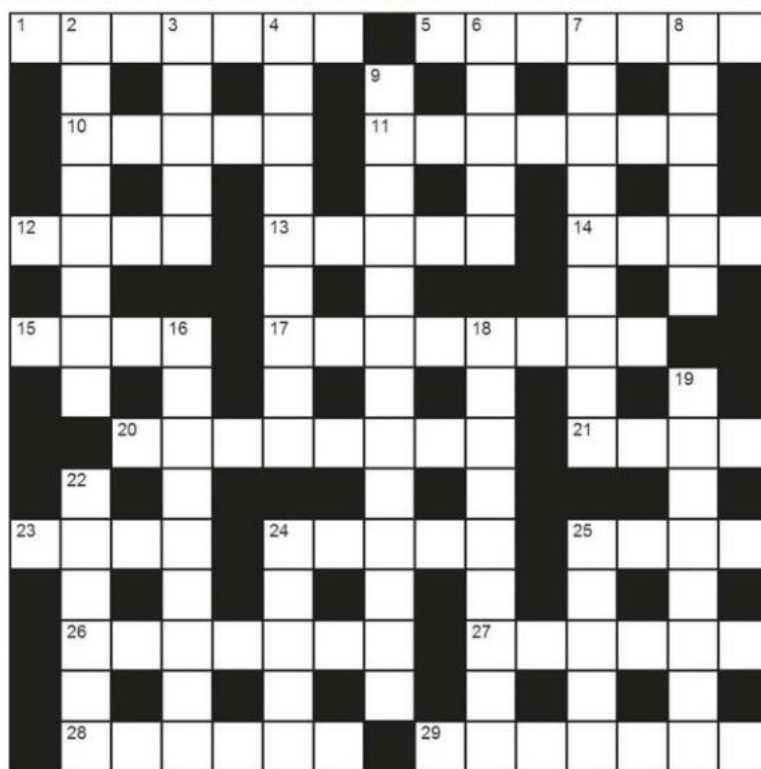
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Across

- 1** An ___ of Rome, Vatican City's independent sovereignty was granted by Mussolini in 1929 (7)
5 British estate manager, Charles Cunningham ___, whose refusal to lower rents led to his Irish tenants conducting a campaign of isolation against him (7)
10 Anglo-Saxon assembly called upon to advise the king from time to time (5)
11/19 eg the Anglo-French agreement of 1904, pledging mutual support (7,8)
12/27 17th-century English Baptist minister, celebrated for books he wrote while in prison for his nonconformist preaching (4,6)
13 Elaborate instruments of torture – one was probably used to break Guy Fawkes under interrogation (5)
14 Name of a number of grand princes of Moscow, the first being nicknamed 'Moneybag(s)' (4)
15 Colloquially, 'common sort', derived from the term for an underprivileged Roman (4)
17 Nickname earned by Liberal party statesman WE Forster due to his repressive policy against the Irish Land League (8)
20 A Cro-Magnon is one of ours (8)
21 See 26 across
23 Colour associated with the uniform of the Union army in the American Civil War (4)
24 North American people, also called Wyandot, after whom a major lake is named (5)
25 See 4 down
26/21 Civil War battle of 1644, first major defeat for the royalists (7,4)
27 See 12 across
28 One of the governors of the provinces reorganised in the reign of Darius the Great (6)
29 It was granted city status in 1969, to mark the Prince of Wales' investiture (7)



Down

- 2** Term for the Americas, possibly first used (in Latin form) by the explorer Amerigo Vespucci (3,5)
3 From the mid-1700s, hat-making became the dominant industry of this town in (historic) Bedfordshire (5)
4/25A A 7th/8th-century monk, author of *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (9,4)
6 Laurence ___, renowned for his act of self-sacrifice on Scott's second Antarctic expedition (5)
7 Wedge-shaped strokes characterise this old western Asian script (9)
8 A term that is often applied to British rule in pre-Partition India (3,3)
9 Stolen from India in 1739, and subsequently lost, it became the symbol of the Persian monarchy (7,6)
16 Federal council of Germany, established in 1871, but the Weimar Republic curtailed its powers (9)
18 The byname of Richard de Clare, 2nd Earl of Pembroke (c1130–76) (9)
19 See 11 across
22 The castle here was the family (Bowes-Lyon) home

- of the late Queen Mother (6)
24 City (ruined in AD 241) in present-day northern Iraq, once a centre of the Parthian empire (5)
25 Country of western Africa, location of the Dahomey kingdom, which flourished in the 18th and 19th centuries (5)

Compiled by Eddie James

SOLUTION TO OUR APRIL CROSSWORD

Across: 5 Stanhope 9 Munich 10 Teutonic 11/7 Frontier town 13 Loyola 14 Henry Hudson 18 Hubble 20 Genocide 21 Klondike 22 Aveiro 23 Essex 24 Stenness
Down: 1 Marianne 2 Shah 3 Colony 4 Enfield 5 Stuart 6 Peter the Great 8 Culloden 12 Israelis 16 Cutlass 17 Address 19 Bonney 22/15 Anne of Cleves

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Explorer
Amerigo
Vespucci
(see 2 down)

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"He really understood politics. He was constantly trying to cobble together compromises that would deliver votes to push through legislation. He was the most amazing modern politician"

Broadcaster Jeremy Vine chooses

Lyndon Johnson

1908-73

Lyndon Johnson, also known as LBJ, was the 36th president of the United States, in office from 1963-69. The Texan assumed the presidency on John F Kennedy's assassination, and went on to win a landslide victory over the Republicans in the 1964 election. Johnson's presidency saw the introduction of his 'Great Society' legislation, aimed at attacking poverty and outlawing racial discrimination. But his popularity nose-dived after he escalated US involvement in the Vietnam War, and he decided not to seek the Democratic US presidential nomination in 1968. He died of a heart attack aged 64.

When did you first hear about Lyndon Johnson?

The world I was born into in 1965 was Johnson's world. I've also just read a fascinating biography about him by Randall Woods, which points out that the central event in his life was being there on the day that Kennedy was shot. At that point, LBJ was politically washed up, but overnight he became the most powerful man in the world. What I find so interesting about him is that he became president through several dramatic rolls of the dice.

What kind of person was Johnson?

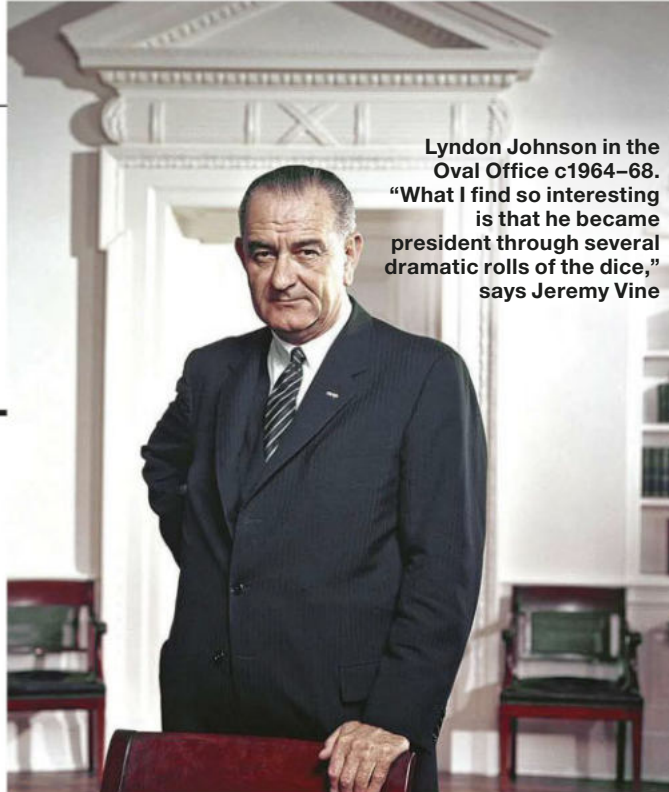
He was incredibly driven – driven to escape the poverty of his childhood, to be somebody, to railroad all his political opponents, to change America. So he had an agenda. He really understood politics and the way it works. It's all about building consensus, even if you have to bash people's heads together.

So there were shades of Frank Underwood (the Machiavellian fictional politician played by Kevin Spacey in the American version of *House of Cards*) about him?

Absolutely. As Senate majority leader before becoming president, he was constantly trying to cobble together compromises that would deliver the votes to push through legislation, and trading in rumour and gossip. He was the most amazing modern politician.

What made him a hero?

Firstly, his sheer stamina. He never really stopped trying to get to the top, and stay at the top. Despite having a near-fatal heart



Lyndon Johnson in the Oval Office c1964-68. "What I find so interesting is that he became president through several dramatic rolls of the dice," says Jeremy Vine

attack which could have taken him out of the game for good, he kept fighting. Secondly, the way he took America three steps forward in terms of its civil rights legislation.

What was his finest hour?

The day that Kennedy was shot, when he immediately rose to the occasion. As he boarded Air Force One, someone told him the plane would take off in 30 minutes and he replied: "Hang on, I'm the president – I decide when it takes off!" Also, the civil rights legislation he pushed through. When he became president there were still separate schools for black and white people in the South, separate washbasins, you name it. He realised all that had to change.

What would he make of today's US political scene?

He was a liberal, but a rightwing one. I think he'd recognise the power of Donald Trump, and be alarmed that the Democrats had failed to tap into the anger that has fuelled Trump's rise.

Is there anything you don't particularly admire about him?

Well, he was promiscuous and unfaithful to his wife. His constant search for compromise could also lead one to the conclusion that all of his principles were tradeable. Lastly, he could be very unpleasant to colleagues: he once told an aide to get out of his office, even though they were on Air Force One at the time.

Are there any parallels between his life and your own?

Like him, I'm fascinated by politics – but unlike him, I've never been interested in supporting any political party.

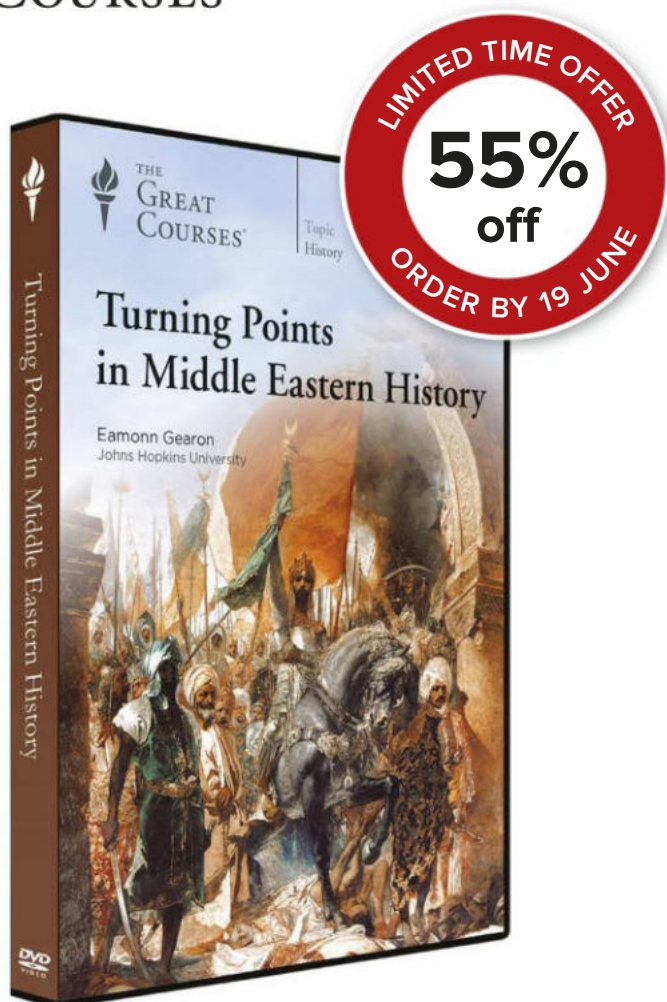
If you could meet Johnson, what would you ask him?

Can you take me shooting on your ranch? He hated Bobby Kennedy and when he took him shooting there, he gave him the biggest gun he had. After firing it, the recoil knocked Bobby to the ground. I'd like to put on a cowboy hat and see if I was man enough to withstand the same gun's recoil. **H**

Jeremy Vine was talking to York Membery

The Jeremy Vine Show is on BBC Radio 2, weekdays at 12 noon. Jeremy also presents the BBC Two quiz Eggheads





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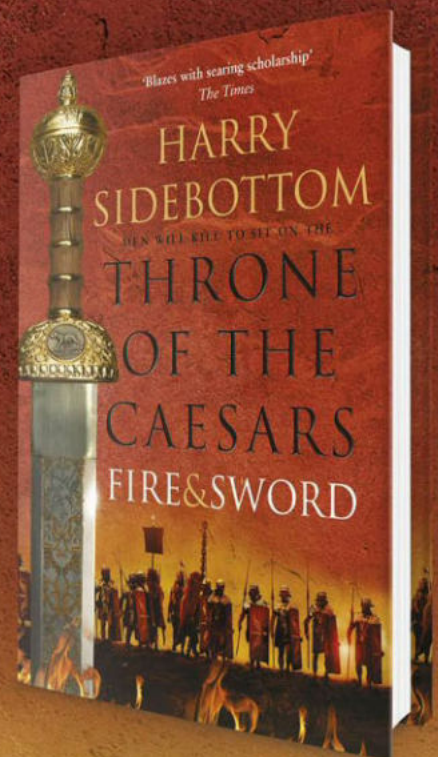
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